

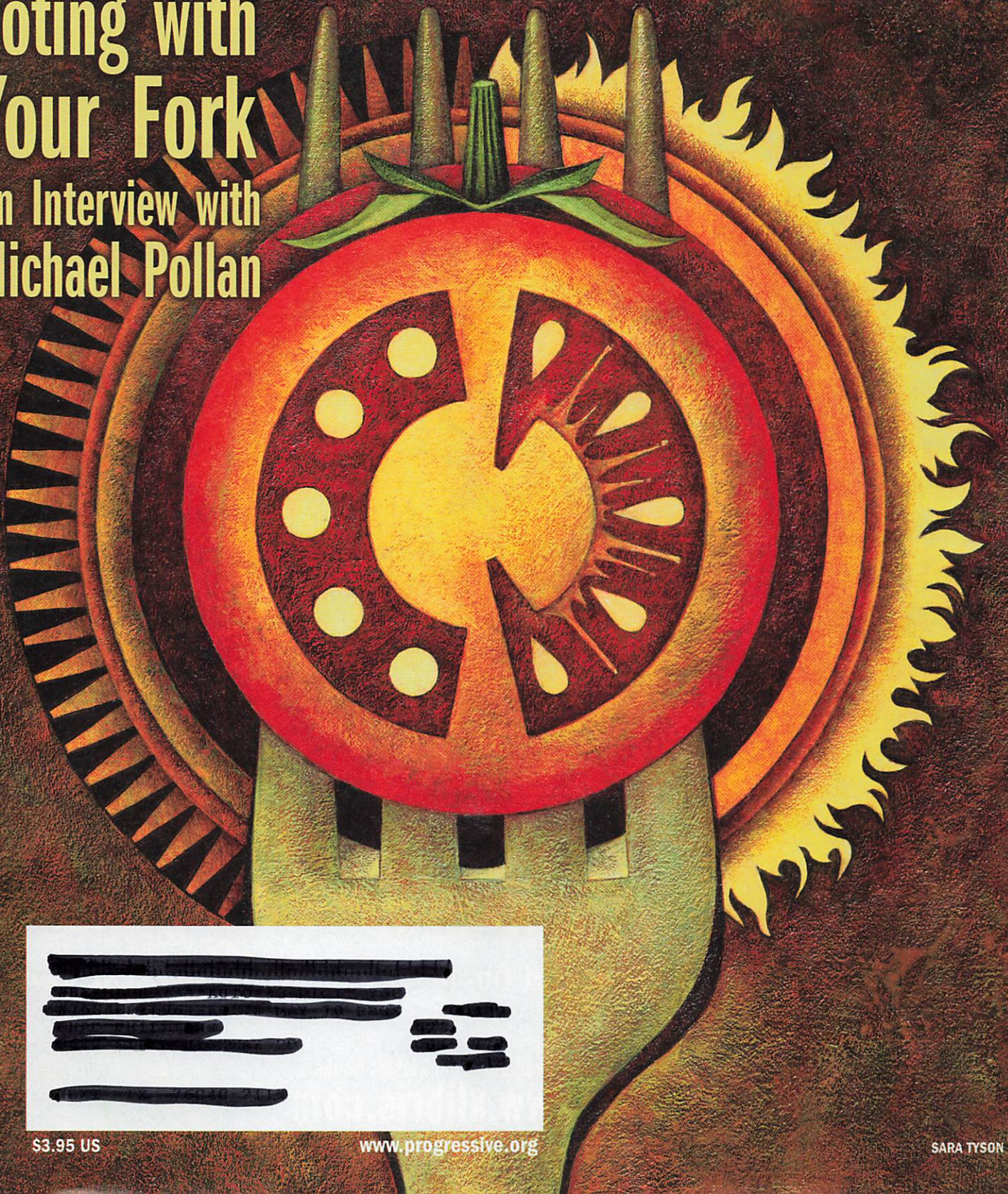
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The Progressive

November 2008

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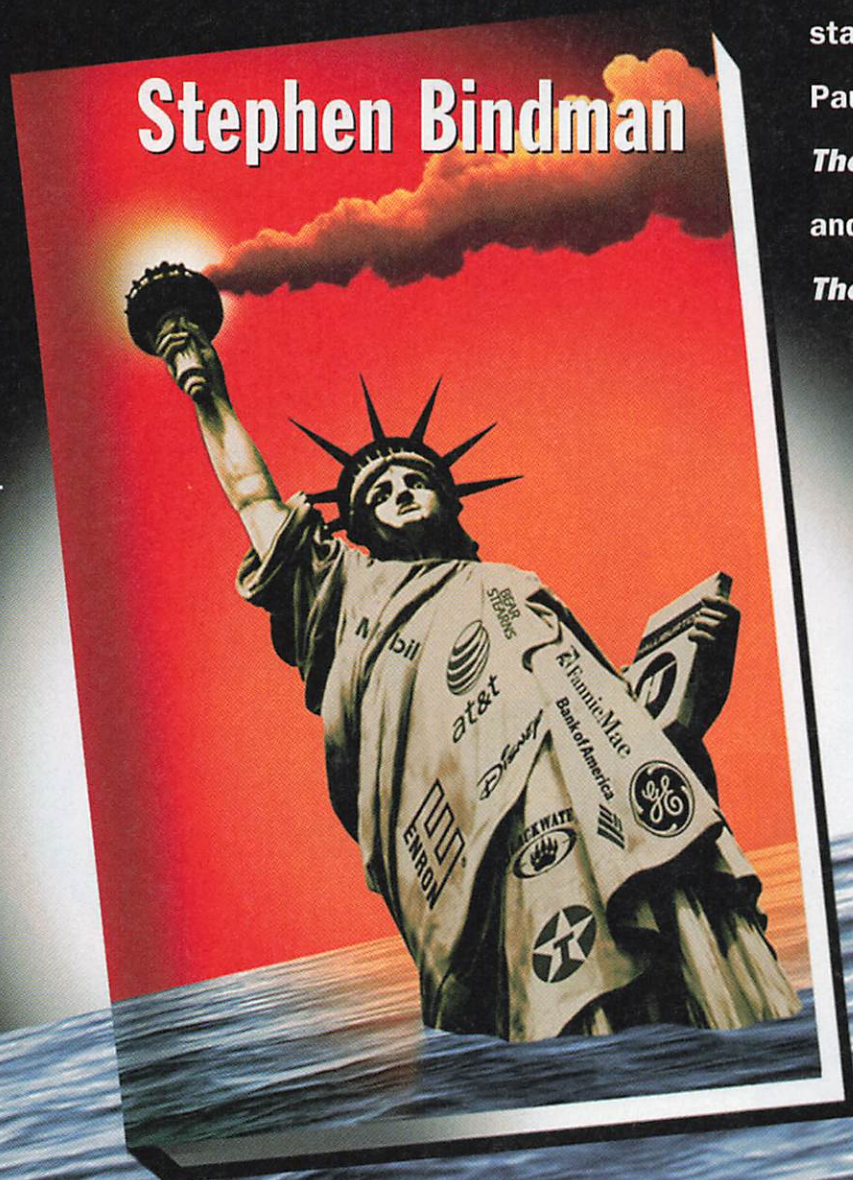
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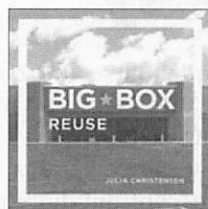


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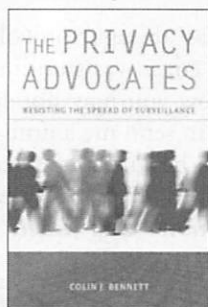
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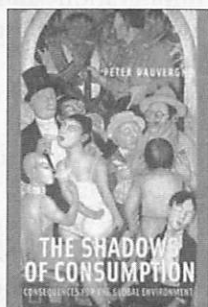


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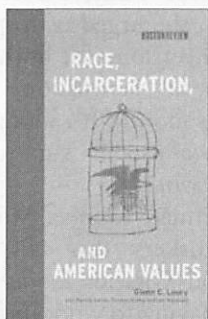


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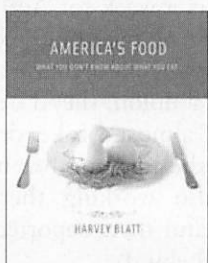
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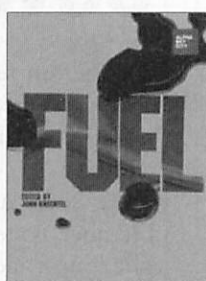


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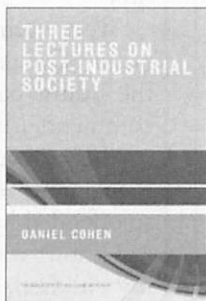


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Editor's Note Matthew Rothschild

Cover Controversy

In the fourteen years since I've been Editor here, I've never faced such negative comments about one of our covers.

As soon as subscribers got their October issue, the calls and e-mails piled up—along with the cancellations.

We're running a sampling of the notes we've received in our Letters to the Editor page. And here are more comments I heard from callers.

"It's exceedingly repulsive and repugnant," said one. "I've never been so offended by a cover in my life."

"I don't want to have to explain to my children and grandchildren why two men are kissing," another said.

"I'm furious," said another. "What does it represent? Why is Obama kissing a white man?"

"You're hurting Obama's chances," yet another one said. "You're reinforcing the stereotype that the Democratic Party is soft on homosexuality. And to have a white and black man kissing makes it seem like the Democrats are for the weird segment of society."

Some people didn't recognize that the other figure in the illustration was John McCain.

One caller said, "Why is Obama kissing a corpse?"

Another said, "He looked like Khrushchev."

A third said, "Is that Henry Paulson?"

To clear matters up, let me offer what the illustrator, Sako Shahinian, had in mind, convey what the cover said to me, and explain why I think it's important that we ran it.

"The theatricality and celebrity that have become staples of the electoral campaign are blurring the lines between parody and reality," Shahinian says.

As for me, I thought the cover might be depicting how close the two candidates were on some issues.

I also thought it could mean it's time to "kiss and make up" and stop the nasty campaigning.

And I saw the cover as a way to make people confront homophobia and racism.

As well as thought-provoking, I thought the cover was stunning.

But I know you may not agree so if you'd like to send me a note or give me a call, I'll be sure to answer you.

Next month, we'll have reactions to the election—and where to go from here.

When Immigration and Customs Enforcement busted the workers in Postville, Iowa, in May, we were all outraged. Our development director, Andrea Potter, went out to Postville two months later to take part in a large solidarity rally for the immigrant workers. When our culture editor, Elizabeth DiNovella, found the first-person account of translator Erik Camayd-Freixas on the Internet, she urged us to publish a condensed version of it in the magazine. With his permission, we are doing so this month. It's a longer feature than we usually run, but it's worth every word.

I was fortunate to meet two of the Postville workers this fall, Alma Deperres and Griselda Lopez. They told me of having to work more than seventy hours a week for Agriprocessors—and for no overtime. And they said their bosses told them that if they tried to join a union, they'd be fired.

Deperres almost broke down in tears when she told me her brother, who was also working there, had been jailed and then deported, leaving his kids behind.

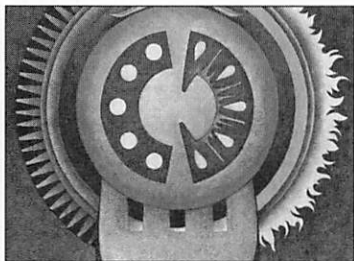
Deperres and Lopez have now formed a small seamstress co-op selling Guatemalan clothing. It's the only work they can find. I hope they make it. ♦

The Progressive

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Letters to the Editor

Kiss Off

We were shocked and disappointed to view your vicious attack on Barack Obama (cover by Sako Shahinian, October issue) portraying him as a homosexual engaged in activity with another man. This cover seems timed and designed to get people to reject Obama's candidacy.

We think you are disgusting. Please remove our name from your mailing lists. We don't want to receive any mail from you.

*Robert and Nancy Page
Latham, New York*

So I was all excited about checking out the latest issue online. I clicked on the link, only to see the cover of McCain and Obama kissing!

I'm no prude, but what the hell? Are you guys nuts?

Forget it—I was going to subscribe, but not now. Right when we need to see images of Obama that are helpful, that show him as a responsible leader, we get this?

*Phyllis Nunn
Raleigh, North Carolina*

We received the October issue and I have been so angry that I cannot describe to you the depth of my rage. We always look forward to receiving *The Progressive* but our goodwill and our subscription are in jeopardy.

Racism is the major issue in this election! Stupid or insane actions such as this cover may be the death of our hopes for real change. Many people, both black and white, are going to find this very offensive. It does not matter what is in the body of this issue. The damage is done.

*Bill and Nan Hartley
Rutherfordton, North Carolina*

I am a liberal Democrat with a capital L, but found your cover for the October issue repulsive and difficult to stomach. I've been a subscriber for a few years but am considering canceling

my subscription due to your poor taste.

You can do far better than this, no matter what the ensuing article. To say the least, I'm disappointed in your portrayal and if I were a non-subscriber, I'd definitely not pick up *The Progressive* to read it.

*Leah Steeves
via e-mail*

What's up with your cover? This is a poor attempt to get attention and attract more readers. It seems that so called liberals like you and your staff would rather tear down Barack Obama by aligning him with corporate interests rather than work toward kicking the GOP dinosaurs out of Washington.

*Kevin Hicks
via e-mail*

I do not know by what demented logic you choose to present a depiction of Barack Obama kissing somebody—I guess some white male—on your October cover, but I found it deeply offensive. Not only was it in bad taste, but you can bet that the Republican rightwing machine will now find a way to suggest that Obama is gay.

If you don't understand that, you need help. You should be ashamed of yourselves.

*James McCartney
Holmes Beach, Florida*

As an African American, I am deeply offended by the portrayal of Barack Obama on the cover of your October issue. Obviously, not only do you show a lack of respect for Obama, who has clearly become a respected name in the world, but for African Americans as well. Did you think to run this past an African American staff member before this went to press? Do you even have such a person? This is outrageous and way over the top.

*Delyna Diop
via email*

What in the world does that cover mean? My daughter says it represents both candidates "kissing up" to various voting blocks. I'm surprised my poor mailman didn't drop it like a hot potato on the sidewalk rather than putting it carefully in my mailbox.

*M. Seikaly
via e-mail*

Your October cover is very offensive. Who in their right mind would print this and degrade a man like this? It is very offensive. Your magazine should be ashamed.

*Shanta Griffin
via e-mail*

The October cover is disgusting. I mean, really. Is this supposed to be funny? And it's not disgusting because it's two men kissing, which is not the problem for me, but Obama and McCain? It's just a disgustingly gross image and I can't fathom what you are trying to say.

Really, your judgment—or lack of it—astounds me sometimes. (No, I'm not canceling my subscription or anything, I'm just ripping off the cover and throwing it in the trash. I mean, what were you thinking?)

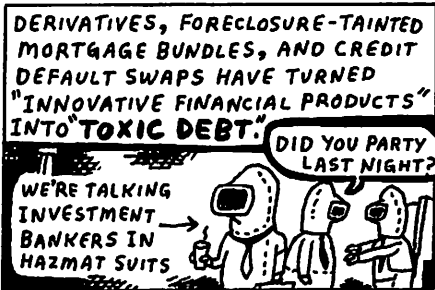
*Lin Kaatz Chary
Gary, Indiana*

I am absolutely offended by your cover in the October issue. Please have someone get back to me as to why the editors would choose such a cover just before the election. It turns my stomach—not because of any gay implications or black/white unions. I am a liberal Democrat and proud of it but this front cover loses the respect I have had for *The Progressive*. Maybe I'm dense but I fail to see what the purpose or the meaning of this is except to demean *The Progressive*. I am withholding canceling my subscription awaiting your explanation.

*Beverly Bustin-Hatheway
via e-mail*

TROUBLETOWN

BY LLOYD DANGLE



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I feel I should inform you that some group of terrorists has taken over your printing facility, and at least some of your October issues were mailed with the most bizarre image I have ever seen on the cover of any magazine.

The good news is that the terrorists failed in their mission, because if there's a message in that illustration, I have no idea what it is . . . unless it is totally subliminal, in which case I'll probably cancel my subscription to *The Progressive* and start listening to Rush Limbaugh every day.

In any event, I think you need to reevaluate your security measures.

Linda Sleffel
Columbus, Ohio

Just received the October issue. The "kissin' cousins" artwork reflects the

state of the two-party campaign as Obama runs away from anything hinting of liberal progressivism and McCain runs away from anything connected to the Bush Administration. Every progressive person in this nation should fear either outcome of these two corporate-anointed pretenders to the dictatorship established by Bush/Cheney.

Richard L. Morgan
via e-mail

I was feeling blue and hoped there would be something in the mail that was interesting. Then I saw your McCain/Obama kiss. Your cover made me smile. The artist showed a sad truth in a funny way, and deserves my thanks.

Frances Haas
Columbia, Connecticut

Who You Calling Racist?

Matthew Rothschild, in the October Comment, asked why the contest remains so tight given the frustration with Republican leadership. His answer: "Because millions of white Americans, especially those who are forty-five and older, may not be able to bring themselves to vote for the black guy. It's that simple."

I have asked the Democratic Party repeatedly for a resume for Barack Obama. I get nothing in return. Tell me five measurable successes the man has had so I can judge his ability to fill the job for which he is interviewing.

I can get nothing out of his campaign except reasons to not vote for the other candidate. When was the last time you interviewed a potential employee for an open position and all they said during the interview was what the current person in the job was doing wrong and what the other candidates for the job opening had done incorrectly?

I don't hire folks like that.

We are simply having a panel interview for an open position. We call it an election.

My fear is that the media doesn't know how to hire folks in the first place and couldn't conduct a professional business interview if it needed to.

Now, apologize to me for your statement (since I am more than forty-five years old) and I'll let you go without further embarrassment to you.

Tom Fogerty
via e-mail

The editors welcome correspondence from readers on all topics, but prefer to publish letters that comment directly on material previously published in *The Progressive*. All letters may be edited for clarity and conciseness, and may appear either in the magazine or on its web page. Letters may be e-mailed to: editorial@progressive.org. Please include your city and state.

Wall Street Socialism

If there are no atheists in foxholes, there are certainly no capitalists in a financial crisis. They become socialists overnight.

So in September and early October, we saw the astonishing spectacle of one financial institution after another coming on bended knee to Washington. And when he couldn't hand out bailouts in single file, Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson proposed an industry-wide bailout.

But true to his Republican and Wall Street roots, his plan was essentially to declare himself king of the economy and to funnel \$700 billion to his friends who got us into this mess in the first place.

Congress didn't swallow that whole hog—but it did take most of the beast. And it added an extra \$100 billion in gravy.

With Wall Street prostrate, you might have thought that the Democratically controlled Congress would have exercised its leverage and gotten a better deal for the American public.

But the Democratic leadership was more concerned about winning over some retrograde Republicans who were still worshipping at the altar of the free market instead of appealing to members of the Progressive Caucus, the Black Caucus, or the Hispanic Caucus, who wanted to make sure that the bailout reached people who were suffering the most—those facing foreclosure and unemployment.

There was nothing in the final bill about a moratorium on foreclosures.

There was nothing in the final bill about a freeze in mortgage interest rates.

There was nothing in the final bill allowing judges to renegotiate mortgages of those who file for bankruptcy. (Under current law, judges are allowed to renegotiate mortgages only on people's second homes—not on their primary residence.)

There was nothing in the bill about creating jobs, or extending unemploy-

ment benefits, or sending money to state and local governments that are having to cut programs savagely.

Instead, members of Congress did what Paulson asked them to do, and threw the money at the lenders who had gambled so recklessly and hoodwinked consumers so shamelessly.

Rather than help people most in need, it gave businesses more tax breaks. And it lifted the federally insured deposit limit from \$100,000 to \$250,000, which provided comfort to the rich, who needed to find safe harbors for their money, but nothing for those who don't have a spare hundred grand.

The biggest, saddest irony of all is that the bill did absolutely zilch to establish new regulations on the financial industry so this crisis won't happen again.

When President Bush spoke to the nation on September 24, he said he would address the "root causes" of the crisis. But he and the bailout package did no such thing.

The bill didn't resurrect the Glass-Steagall Act of the New Deal, which divided regular banking from financial banking. Bill Clinton, Robert Rubin, and Phil Gramm engineered its destruction in 1999.

Nor did the bill repeal the Commodities Futures Modernization Act, which Gramm pushed through, with Clinton's approval again, in December 2000. This law prohibited the SEC and other government agencies from outlawing or at least regulating the fancy swaps and derivatives that sent our economy down a trapdoor.

Lenders of mortgages, rather than keeping them in their own institutions, sold them to investors, who repackaged them and resold them. As a result, the risk to the original lender vanished, and mortgage peddlers didn't care how unqualified their customers were. On top of that, when one institution after another grabbed up "credit default swaps" and "collateralized debt obligations," they all got entangled with each other, and when one institution started to drown, the others began to taste the salty water.

"This bailout is the result of high-risk misbehavior by distant financial giants. Reform and regulation should come first, not later."

—*Representative
Marcy Kaptur,
Democrat of Ohio*

As Senator Russ Feingold warned on September 30, "Negotiators must address the deeply flawed regulatory structure that paved the way for this crisis. The Administration and others have said such reforms must wait for another day, but once a rescue package is enacted, we lose the leverage needed to enact tough reforms to get the financial sector to clean up its act, and we risk having to deal with this same mess all over again."

But few heeded his words.

This was a colossal missed opportunity. And it placed the burden on the wrong people.

"If we are going to bail out Wall Street," said Senator Bernie Sanders, "it should be those people who have caused the problem, those people who have benefited from Bush's tax breaks for millionaires and billionaires, those people who have taken advantage of deregulation, those people are the people who should pick up the tab, and not ordinary working people."

The injustice of the bailout can't be overestimated. Just look at what we could have bought with that money instead: providing health care for 51.6 million people for four years, hiring 2.9 million elementary schoolteachers for four years, granting 27 million four-year scholarships for university students, or heating 181 million homes with renewable electricity for four years. That's according to the National Priorities Project, and that's when the price tag was \$700 billion, not \$800 billion.

Priorities is the relevant word.

There's always \$2 trillion available when the President wants to wage a needless, reckless war.

There's always \$800 billion available for Wall Street.

But when is there money for universal health care?

When is there money to eliminate poverty?

When is there money for full, green employment?

When is there money for Head Start?

When is there money for free college education?

We've been swindled, time and again, into believing that we simply can't afford to pay for the crying social needs that we have in this country.

And now we're being swindled again by those who say the bailout itself means further postponement of social spending.

If we're going to have socialism for Wall Street, let's spread it around. Let's protect people—not just banks—from catastrophic losses. That means universal health care. That means adequate long-term compensation for layoffs. That means generous disability benefits and expanded food stamps.

Let's enable people—not just banks—to prosper. That means giving people a living wage and decent,



affordable housing. That means giving every young person the opportunity to go to college.

Let's take care of the commons. That means protecting our state and national parks. Maintaining our public libraries. Providing universal access to the Internet. And preserving our environment by getting serious about curbing global warming.

If the collapse of the financial industry tells us anything, it is that free markets do not always work, and that there is a need for active government intervention. Even Bush admitted that, though he added that "democratic capitalism is the best system ever devised."

It isn't. Especially in the primitive form that has taken over this country since Ronald Reagan became President.

The "democratic capitalism" that Bush bragged about is destroying the banking system and people's standard of living—along with the planet.

There is one consolation. The next Administration will have an opportunity to come clean with the American people. The era of cowboy capitalism should be over, the need for regulation indisputable. The dominant ideology has proven itself—just like the financial institutions—to be bankrupt.

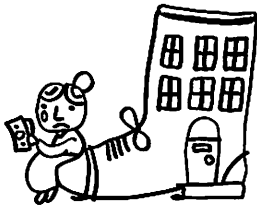
—Matthew Rothschild

"I have a hard time understanding why we are giving \$700 billion to the Secretary of the Treasury, the former CEO of Goldman Sachs, who along with other financial institutions, actually got us into this problem. Now, maybe I'm the only person in America who thinks that's a little bit weird, but that is what I think."

—Senator Bernie Sanders,
Independent of Vermont

No Comment

Social Engineering

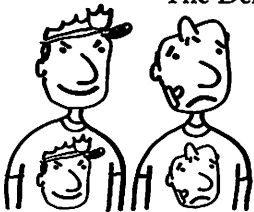


Louisiana State Representative John LaBruzzo, Republican of Metairie, said he is studying a plan to pay poor women \$1,000 to have their Fallopian tubes tied, reports *The Times-Picayune*. LaBruzzo, who is worried about the rising cost of welfare, acknowledged his idea might be a difficult sell politically: "I don't know if it's a viable option."

Closed Campus

An effigy of Barack Obama was found hanging from a tree at George Fox University, a small Christian college in Oregon. According to *Newsweek*, "around the neck of the cardboard cutout of Obama was a note reading, 'Act Six reject,' a reference to an affirmative-action-style program on campus that seeks out students from urban areas who often happen to have minority ethnic backgrounds."

Tasteless T-shirt

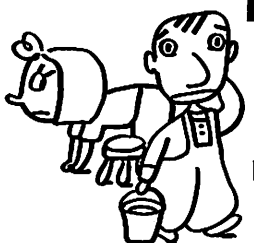


The Denver police union is selling T-shirts that poke fun at protesters at the Democratic National Convention, reports KMGH. The back of the shirt reads, "We get up early to beat the crowds" and "2008 DNC," and has a caricature of a police officer holding a baton. The police arrested 154 people at the DNC.

Unreliable Witness

The Times of London reports that the Pentagon relied upon Fox News correspondent Oliver North to corroborate its denial of killing civilians in the Afghan village of Azizabad on August 22. North, infamous for lying to Congress during the Iran-Contra scandal in the 1980s, had embedded with U.S. forces in Afghanistan. The Afghan government said that up to ninety civilians, including sixty children, were killed in the bombing.

Lactose Intolerant



STUART GOLDENBERG

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) sent a letter to Ben & Jerry's ice cream urging the company to replace the cow's milk it uses in its products with human breast milk, reports WNBC. PETA said that the use of human breast milk would decrease the suffering of dairy cows and their calves.

Fuzzy Math

Forbes.com reports that the \$700 billion figure Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson requested to buy up bad debt is fuzzy. "It's not based on any particular data point," a Treasury spokeswoman told Forbes.com. "We just wanted to choose a really large number."

Sorry for Not Smoking

From CNN: "The leader of Canada's Green Party, whose party supports the legalization of marijuana, has apologized for never smoking pot. Elizabeth May said she was 'not a big fan' of marijuana use, the country's national news agency reported."

Kremlin Killed Kenny

Critics are accusing the Kremlin of returning to Soviet-style indoctrination after Russia moved to ban American cartoons *The Simpsons*, *South Park*, and *Family Guy* and replace them with programs teaching children to be patriotic, reports the *Telegraph*.

Command Performance

From *Democracy Now*: "A member of a renowned African American dance ensemble says Israeli airport guards forced him to dance to prove his identity because of his Muslim-sounding name. Abdur-Rahim Jackson says he was singled out as the Alvin Ailey troupe arrived at Ben Gurion International airport."

Giuliani Cashes In

Before Congress even approved the Wall Street bailout, Rudy Giuliani began positioning his law firm to cash in on it, reports the *New York Daily News*. Bracewell & Giuliani announced on September 25 that it set up a financial industry task force to guide firms through "legislative, regulatory, and enforcement challenges" posed by "impending actions by Congress, the Treasury Department, the Federal Reserve, and the SEC." The task force consists of employees with deep connections to the Bush White House such as Marc Mukasey, a former federal prosecutor in Manhattan and the son of U.S. Attorney General Michael Mukasey.

Readers are invited to submit No Comment items. Please send original clippings or photocopies and give name and date of publication. Submissions cannot be acknowledged or returned.

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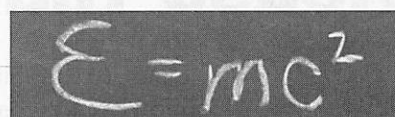
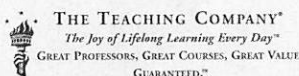
About Your Professor

Dr. Richard Wolfson (Ph.D., Dartmouth College) is Professor of Physics at Middlebury College in New England. Decades of teaching at Middlebury, with its strong emphasis on the humanities, have made him an expert at demonstrating the logic and significance of physics to students from many fields. His writings have appeared in *Scientific American*. He is author of *Physics for Scientists and Engineers*.

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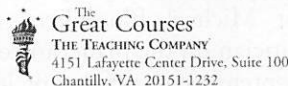
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House That Greed Built



Imagine if the city political leaders and team owners of the Chicago Cubs and the Boston Red Sox tried to bulldoze Wrigley Field or Fenway Park. Fans in those cities would be chaining themselves to the wrecking balls. Armed with only a beer and a bratwurst, they would be doing their best impression of Tiananmen Square. And yet Yankee Stadium, the eighty-five-year-old "House That Ruth Built," has now closed its doors with nary a whimper. From ex and current players, to fans in the Bronx, to the tweedy, misty-eyed, baseball cognoscenti, the collective sentiment was summed up simply by Yankee captain Derek Jeter: "It's time."

The absence of resistance speaks to the psychology of a ball club and fan base that's been mercenary in its pursuit of success and pitiless relative to other concerns. If a new stadium means new revenue streams, which would mean an even more crushing financial advantage over their opponents, then so be it. Some lay this on the feet of the bullying General himself, George Steinbrenner, but the roots lie much deeper.

The author Gay Talese wrote famously in 1958: "God, Brooks Brothers, and United States Steel are believed to be solidly in the Yankees' corner. . . . The efficiently triumphant Yankee machine is a great institution, but, as they say, who can fall in love with U.S. Steel?"

Who indeed?

And yet I wonder if even the Yan-

Dave Zirin is the author, most recently, of "A People's History of Sports in the United States."

kee faithful may balk once they step back and look at what their new stadium will mean for that pesky real world that acts as backdrop to all their history and success. If the old stadium was the House That Ruth Built, the new park is the House That Steinbrenner and Bloomberg fleeced. As much as \$850 million in public money is going toward the \$1.3 billion stadium, and \$1.3 billion, in true Yankee tradition, would be a higher price tag than any park in the country. While the rest of the nation

ings Institution to the Cato Institute that publicly funded stadiums are little more than a sporting shock doctrine: privatizing profits and socializing debt (sound familiar?).

On Capitol Hill, Representative Dennis Kucinich disputed the mayor's assertions. Kucinich said there was "waste and abuse of public dollars" in construction of the new stadium.

Kucinich's House oversight panel discovered "substantial evidence of improprieties and possible fraud by the financial architects of the new Yankee Stadium."

"Not only have we found waste and abuse of public dollars subsidizing a project that is for the exclusive benefit of a private entity, the Yankees, but also we have discovered serious questions about the accuracy of certain representations made by the City of New York to the federal government," Kucinich said.

Representative Diane Watson, Democrat of California, took it even further, arguing that in the context of the economic crisis, the idea of funding these monuments to corporate greed is immoral. "In this country we have allowed

the upper class to destroy the middle class," she said.

Anyone who has been to New York City knows how correct this is. The airports look like dilapidated, old Hollywood movie sets. The roads are broken. And the South Bronx, where the new stadium is going up, has been picked apart. The idea that the priorities for New York City should be the House That Steinbrenner Fleeced while schools and hospitals crumble is more than immoral. It's monstrous.

Even a Yankee fan should be able to see that. ♦



PATRICK MARTINEZ

is sweating out the financial future, Yankee Stadium blares, "Mission Accomplished."

Mayor Michael Bloomberg, the only politician on the planet to come out in September in defense of John McCain's asinine statement that "the fundamentals of our economy are strong," said, "We want these kinds of facilities here. Having new stadiums is as important as other things in terms of, not just the spirit for the people who live here, but our economy." He said this despite all evidence by every think tank from the Brook-

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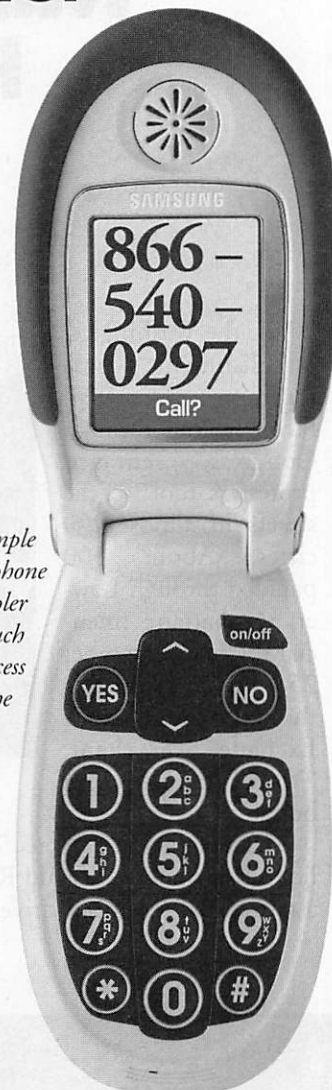
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Wall Street Protests

New York City



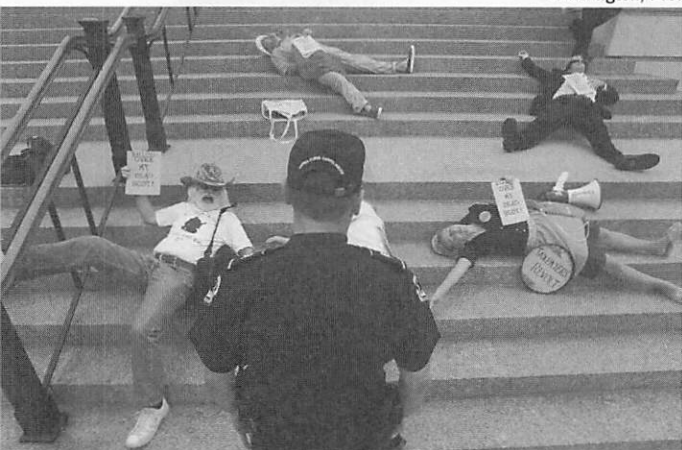
AFP PHOTO/RAPPORT

While the Washington establishment was ramming the Wall Street bailout through Congress, enraged protesters took to the streets in almost 200 cities. About 500 paraded through Lower Manhattan's financial district September 25, stopping outside the New York Stock Exchange to chant, "You broke it, you bought it."

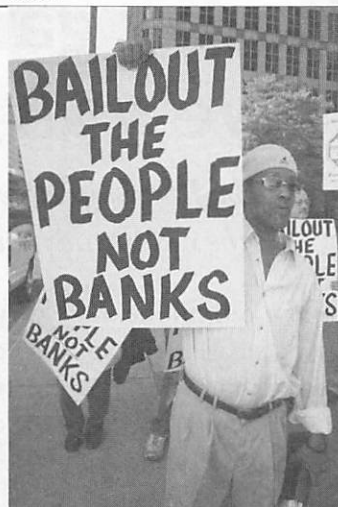
"It's out-fuckin-rageous. They expect the public to bail them out?" said Rich Haber, sixty-one, a retired Brooklyn bus driver.

—Steven Wishnia

Washington, D.C.



AFP PHOTO/GETTY IMAGES/CHIP SOMODEVILLA

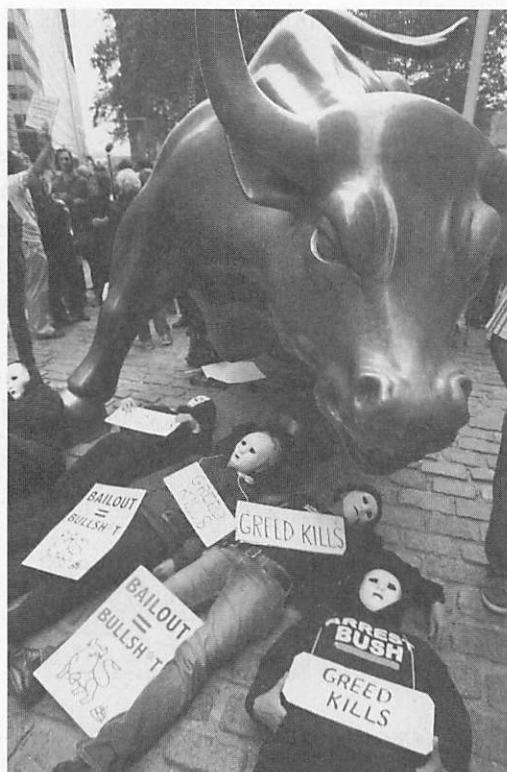


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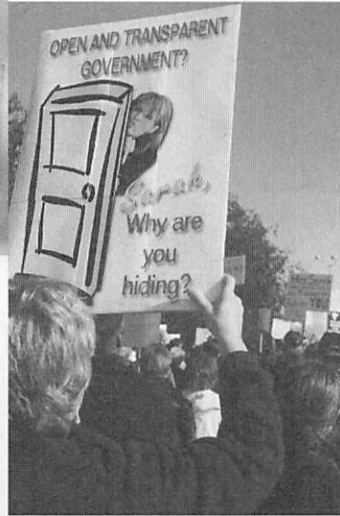
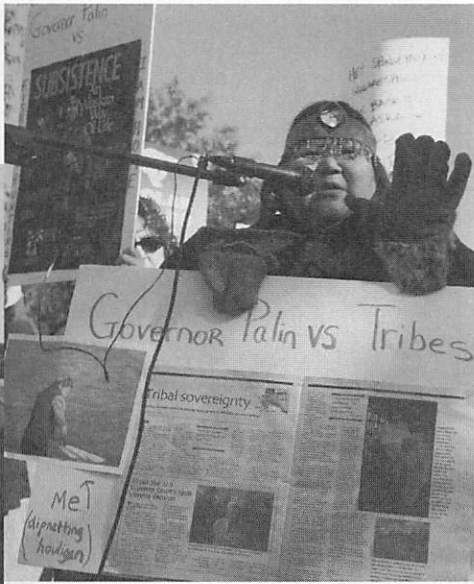


New York City

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Alaskans Protest Palin

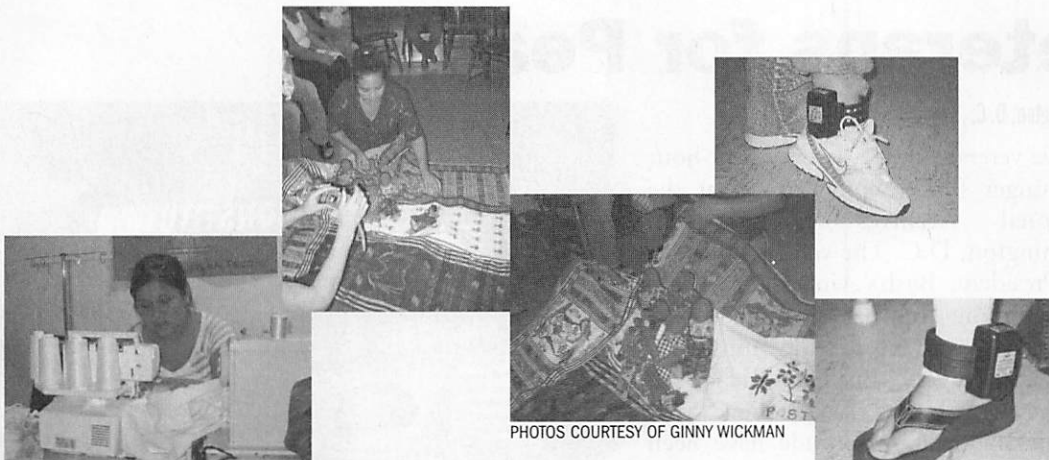


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Anchorage

More than 1,000 people took part in a protest September 13 organized by a new group called Alaska Women Reject Palin. "The Saturday protest in front of the Loussac Library appeared bigger than any Anchorage has seen in recent memory," wrote the *Anchorage Daily News*. Two weeks later, Alaskans for Truth organized a "Hold Palin Accountable Rally." They demanded Governor Sarah Palin uphold her promise to cooperate with the state legislature's investigation into her firing of the public safety commissioner.

Weaving the American Dream



PHOTOS COURTESY OF GINNY WICKMAN

In the aftermath of the May Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raid in Postville, Iowa, workers who were released by ICE were left with no means to support their families. Some of the Guatemalan workers of Mayan descent initiated a fair trade cooperative called "Nuevo Amanecer" (New Dawn), featuring traditional Mayan weaving and handicrafts.

AFP PHOTO/GETTY IMAGES/ABID KATIB



AFP PHOTO/UPI PHOTO/ISMAEL MOHAMAD



Break the Blockade

Dozens of international activists sailed into Gaza on August 23 to protest the Israeli blockade of the Palestinian territory. A second voyage to



challenge the Israeli naval blockade of the Gaza Strip will sail from Cyprus this autumn.

For more information, go to freegaza.org.

AFP PHOTO/GETTY IMAGES/ABID KATIB

Veterans for Peace

Washington, D. C.

Five veterans held a twenty-four-hour hunger strike September 23 at the National Archives building in Washington, D.C. The veterans protested President Bush's violations of the Constitution. They handed out copies of a "citizens' warrant for the immediate arrest of George W. Bush and Richard B. Cheney." It said, "We believe that felonies of great magnitude have been committed, and the evidentiary bases of these are conclusively established in the public record."

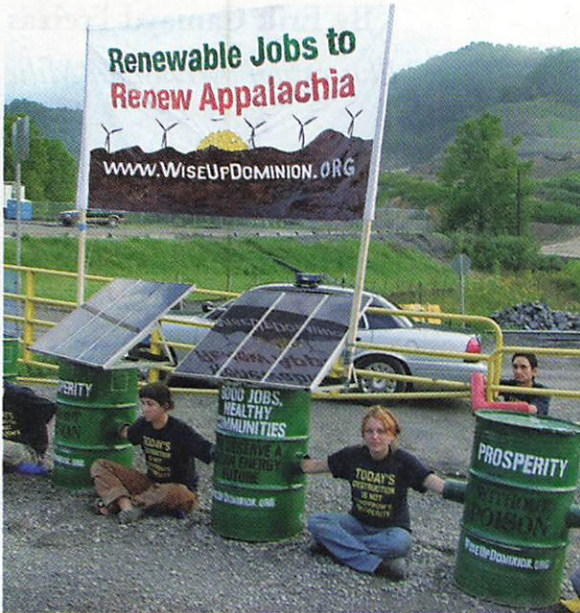
For more information, go to veteransforpeace.org.



COURTESY OF CRYSTAL KIM/VETERANS FOR PEACE

Demanding Clean Energy

On September 16, fifty people demonstrated at the construction site of Dominion Virginia's coal-fired power plant in Wise County, Virginia. The group criticized the health and environmental risks of the new coal plant. Twenty protesters locked their bodies to eight large steel drums, two of which had operational solar panels affixed to the top that



AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER/DEBRA MCCOWN

illuminated their banner. Police arrested fourteen.

For more information, go to wiseupdominion.org.

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criticized the health and environmental risks of the new coal plant. Twenty protesters locked their bodies to eight large steel drums, two of which had operational solar panels affixed to the top that

AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS/THE HERALD/MARK MULLIGAN



Strike Against Boeing



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Seattle

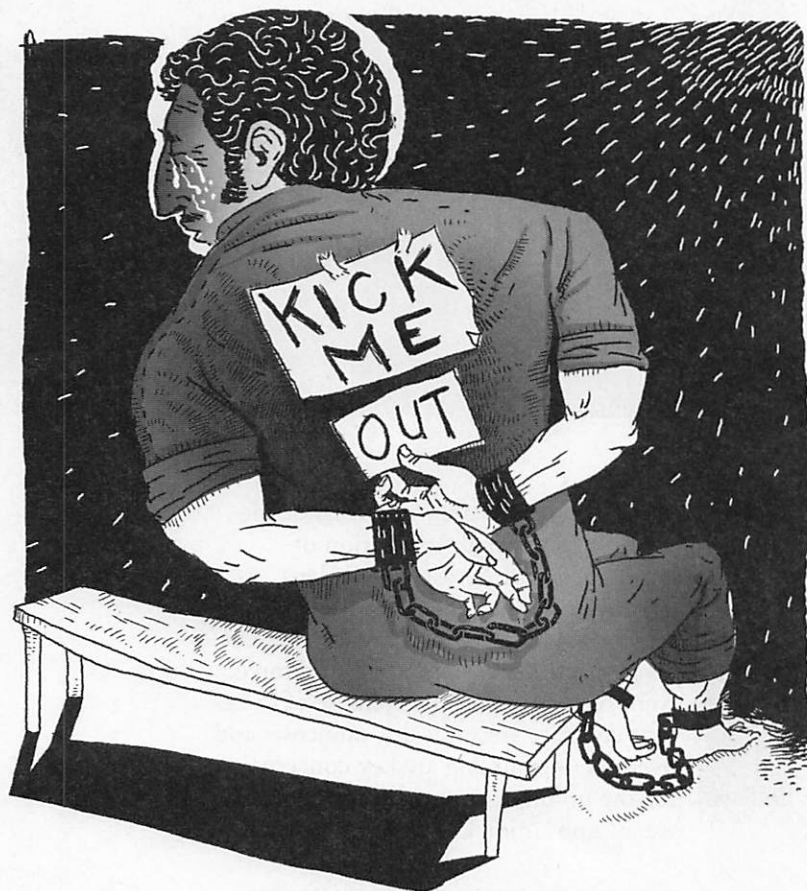
More than 27,000 members of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers began a walkout September 6 at Boeing factories. The machinists, who represent 16 percent of the company's workforce, went on strike after the collapse of three-year contract talks. Health care costs and overseas outsourcing are key concerns for the union, along with the company's use of non-union contingency workers.

For more information, go to goiam.org.

By Erik Camayd-Freixas

Illustration by Dushan Milic

A Matter of Interpretation



I arrived late in Waterloo, Iowa, Monday night, May 12, and missed the 8 p.m. interpreters' briefing. I was instructed by phone to meet the next morning at 7 a.m. in the hotel lobby and carpool to the National Cattle Congress, where we would begin our work.

The clerk's office of the U.S. District Court had contracted with me and twenty-five other federally certified interpreters the month before. We were told we were to go to a remote location as part of a "Continuity of Operation Exercise" just in case there was an emergency, which in Iowa is likely to be a tornado or flood. I was not prepared for a disaster of a different kind, one that was entirely man-made.

We arrived at the heavily guarded compound, went through security, and gathered inside the retro "Electric Park Ballroom," where a makeshift court had been set up. The clerk of court, who coordinated the interpreters, said: "Have you seen the news? There was an immigration raid yesterday at 10 a.m. They have some 400 detainees here. We'll be working late conducting initial appearances for the next few days."

The clerk was referring to the raid of Agriprocessors, Inc., the nation's largest kosher slaughterhouse and meat packing plant, located in the town of

Erik Camayd-Freixas teaches interpreting at Florida International University.

Postville, Iowa. Immigration officials boasted it was “the largest single-site operation of its kind in American history.”

The clerk gave us a cursory tour of the compound. The National Cattle Congress is a sixty-acre fairground that had been transformed into a sort of detention center. Fenced in behind the ballroom/courtroom were twenty-three trailers from federal authorities, including two set up as sentencing courts, various Homeland Security buses, and an “incident response” truck. Scores of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents and U.S. Marshals roamed about. And in the background stood two large buildings: a pavilion where agents and prosecutors had established a command center, and a gymnasium filled with tight rows of cots where some 300 male detainees were kept, the women being housed in county jails.

Then began the saddest procession I have ever witnessed, which the public would never see, because cameras were not allowed past the perimeter of the compound. Driven single-file in groups of ten, shackled at the wrists, waist, and ankles, chains dragging as they shuffled through, the slaughterhouse workers were brought in for arraignment. They sat and listened through headsets to the interpreted initial appearance before marching out again to be bused to different county jails, only to make room for the next row of ten. They appeared to be uniformly no more than five feet tall, mostly illiterate Guatemalan peasants with Mayan last names. Some were in tears; others bore faces of worry, fear, and embarrassment. They all spoke Spanish, a few rather laboriously. It dawned on me that, aside from their Guatemalan or Mexican nationality, which was imposed on them, they too were Native Americans, in shackles. They stood out in stark racial contrast to the rest of us as they started their slow penguin march across the makeshift court. They had all waived their right to be indicted by a grand jury and

accepted instead an *information*, or simple charging document by the U.S. Attorney, hoping to be quickly deported, since they had families to support back home.

But it was not to be. They were criminally charged with “aggravated identity theft” and “Social Security fraud”—charges they did not understand . . . and, frankly, neither could I.

We got off to a slow start that first day, because ICE’s barcode booking system malfunctioned, and the documents had to be manually sorted and processed with the help of the U.S. Attorney’s Office. Consequently, less than a third of the detainees were ready for arraignment that Tuesday. There were more than enough interpreters at that point, so we rotated in shifts of three interpreters per hearing. Court adjourned shortly after 4 p.m. However, the prosecution worked overnight, planning on a 7 a.m.-to-midnight court marathon the next day.

I was eager to get back to my hotel room to find out more about the case, since the day’s repetitive hearings afforded little information, and everyone there was mostly refraining from comment. There was frequent but sketchy news on local TV. A colleague had suggested *The Des Moines Register*. So I went to DesMoinesRegister.com and started reading all the articles, along with the fifty-seven-page “ICE Search Warrant Application.”

These were the vital statistics. Of Agriprocessors’ 968 employees, about 75 percent were illegal immigrants. There were 697 arrest warrants, but late-shift workers had not arrived, so “only” 390 were arrested: 314 men and 76 women, 290 Guatemalans, 93 Mexicans, 4 Ukrainians, and 3 Israelis who were not seen in court. Some were released on humanitarian grounds: 56—mostly mothers with unattended children, a few with medical reasons, and 12 juveniles—were temporarily released with ankle monitors or directly turned over for

deportation. In all, 306 were held for prosecution. Only 5 of the 390 originally arrested had any kind of prior criminal record. There remained 307 outstanding warrants.

Postville, Iowa (pop. 2,273), where nearly half the people worked at Agriprocessors, had lost one-third of its population by Tuesday morning. Besides those arrested, many had fled the town in fear. Several families had taken refuge at St. Bridget’s Catholic Church, terrified, sleeping on pews and refusing to leave. At the local high school, only 3 of the 15 Latino students came back on Tuesday, while at the elementary and middle school, 120 of the 363 children were absent. Some of the children were born in the United States and thus American citizens. Sometimes one parent was deportable, other times both. “Hundreds of families were torn apart by this raid,” said a Catholic nun.

The more I found out, the more I felt blindsided into an assignment of which I wanted no part. Even though I understood the rationale for all the secrecy, I also knew that a contract interpreter has the right to refuse a job which conflicts with his moral intuitions. Now I was already there, far from home, and holding a half-spent \$1,800 plane ticket. So I faced a frustrating dilemma. I seriously considered withdrawing from the assignment for the first time in my twenty-three years as a federally certified interpreter, citing conflict of interest. In fact, I have both an ethical and contractual obligation to withdraw if a conflict of interest exists that compromises my neutrality. Appended to my contract are the *Standards for Performance and Professional Responsibility for Contract Court Interpreters in the Federal Courts*, where it states: “Interpreters shall disclose any real or perceived conflict of interest . . . and shall not serve in any matter in which they have a conflict of interest.” The question was, did I have one? In all my years as a court interpreter, I have taken a front row seat in countless criminal cases rang-

ing from rape, capital murder, and mayhem to terrorism, narcotics, and human trafficking. I am not the impressionable kind. Moreover, as a professor of interpreting, I have confronted my students with every possible conflict scenario, or so I thought. The truth is that nothing could have prepared me for the prospect of helping our government put hundreds of innocent people in jail. In my ignorance and disbelief, I reluctantly decided to stay the course and see what happened next.

Wednesday, May 14, our second day in court, was to be a long one. The interpreters were divided into two shifts, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., and 3 p.m. to 10 p.m. I chose the latter. Through the day, the procession continued, ten by ten, hour after hour, the same charges, the same recitation from the magistrates, the same faces, chains, and shackles, on the defendants. There was little to remind us that they were actually 306 individuals, except that occasionally, as though to break the monotony, a detainee would dare to speak for the others and beg to be deported quickly so that they could feed their families back home.

Later in the day, three groups of women were brought in. One of them, whose husband was also arrested, was released to care for her children, ages two and five, as she was uncertain of their whereabouts. Several men and women were weeping, but two women were particularly grief stricken. The first was sobbing and would repeatedly struggle to bring a sleeve to her nose, but her wrists, shackled around her waist, simply would not reach, so she just dripped until she was taken away with the rest. The other one, a Ukrainian woman, was arraigned separately when a Russian telephonic interpreter came on. She spoke softly into a cellular phone, while the interpreter told her story in English over the speakerphone. Her young daughter, gravely ill, had lost her hair and was too weak to walk. She

had taken her to Moscow and Kiev but to no avail. She was told her child needed an operation or would soon die. She had come to America to work and raise the money to save her daughter back in Ukraine.

The next day we started early, at 6:45 a.m. We were told that we had to finish the hearings by 10 a.m. Thus far, the work had oddly resembled a judicial assembly line where the meat packers were mass processed. But things were about to get a lot more personal as we prepared to interpret for individual attorney-client conferences.

In those first three days, interpreters had been pairing up with defense attorneys to help interview their clients. Each of the eighteen court-appointed attorneys represented seventeen defendants on average. By now, the clients had been sent to several state and county prisons throughout eastern Iowa, so we had to interview them in jail. The attorney with whom I was working had clients in Des Moines and wanted to be there first thing in the morning. So a colleague and I drove the two-and-a-half hours that evening and stayed overnight in a hotel outside the city. We met the attorney in jail Friday morning, but the clients had not been accepted there and had been sent instead to a state penitentiary in Newton, another forty-five-minute drive. While we waited to be admitted, the attorney pointed out the reason why the prosecution wanted to finish arraignments by 10 a.m. Thursday: According to the writ of habeas corpus, they had seventy-two hours from Monday's raid to charge the prisoners or release them for deportation (only a handful would be so lucky). The right of habeas corpus, but of course! It dawned on me that we were paid overtime, adding hours to the day, in a mad rush to abridge habeas corpus, only to help put more workers in jail. Now I really felt bad. But it would soon get worse. I was about to bear the brunt of my conflict of interest.

It came with my first jail interview. The purpose was for the attorney to explain the uniform plea agreement that the government was offering. The explanation, which we repeated over and over to each client, went like this. There are three possibilities. If you plead guilty to the charge of "knowingly using a false Social Security number," the government will withdraw the heavier charge of "aggravated identity theft," and you will serve five months in jail, be deported without a hearing, and placed on supervised release for three years. If you plead not guilty, you could wait in jail six-to-eight months for a trial. Even if you win at trial, you will still be deported, and could end up waiting longer in jail than if you just pled guilty. You would also risk losing at trial and receiving a two-year minimum sentence before being deported. Some clients understood their "options" better than others.

That first interview, though, took three hours. The client, a Guatemalan peasant afraid for his family, spent most of that time weeping at our table, in a corner of the crowded jailhouse visiting room.

How did he come here from Guatemala?

"I walked."

What?

"I walked for a month and ten days until I crossed the river."

He crossed alone, met other immigrants, and hitched a truck ride to Dallas, then Postville, where he heard there was sure work. He slept in an apartment hallway with other immigrants until employed. He had been working only a couple of months when he was arrested. (Maybe he was lucky: Another man who began that Monday had been working for only twenty minutes.) His children, wife, mother, and sister depended on him back home. He was their sole support and did not know how they were going to make it with him in jail for five months.

"I just wanted to work a year or two, save, and then go back to my

family, but it was not to be," the Guatemalan man said. "The Good Lord knows I was just working and not doing anyone any harm."

This man, like many others, was in fact *not* guilty. The statute defining identity theft says someone committing that crime "knowingly uses a means of identification of another person with the intent to commit any unlawful activity or felony." "Knowingly" and "intent" are necessary elements of the charges, but most of the clients we interviewed did not even know what a Social Security number was or what purpose it served. This worker simply had the papers filled out for him at the plant, since he could not read or write Spanish, let alone English. But the lawyer still had to advise him that pleading guilty was in his best interest.

He was unable to make a decision. "You all do and undo," he said. "So you can do whatever you want with me."

None of the "options" really mattered to him. Caught between despair and hopelessness, he just wept. He had failed his family, and was devastated.

I went for some napkins, but he refused them. I offered him a cup of soda, which he superstitiously declined, saying it could be "poisoned."

His spirit was broken, and he could no longer think. He stared for a while at the signature page pretending to read it, although I knew he was actually praying for guidance and protection.

Before he signed with a scribble, he said: "God knows you are just doing your job to support your families, and that job is to keep me from supporting mine."

There was my conflict of interest, well put by a weeping, illiterate man.

We worked that day for as long as our emotional fortitude allowed, and we had to come back to a full day on Sunday to interview the rest of the clients.

One of them, a nineteen-year-old, said his parents were too old to work and had no other means of supporting themselves.

Another client, a young Mexican, had an altogether different case. He had worked at the plant for ten years and had two American-born daughters, a two-year-old and a new baby. He had a good case with Immigra-

"God knows you are
just doing your job to
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tion for an adjustment of status, which would allow him to stay. But if he took the plea agreement, he would lose that chance and face deportation as a felon convicted of a crime of "moral turpitude." On the other hand, if he pled "not guilty" he had to wait several months in jail for trial and risk getting a two-year sentence. After an agonizing decision, he concluded that he had to take the five-month deal and deportation, because as he put it, "I cannot be away from my children for so long." His case was complicated; it needed research in immigration law, a change in the plea agreement, and, above all, more time.

Immigration lawyers were alarmed that the detainees were being rushed into a plea without adequate consultation on the consequences. The criminal defense attorneys had insufficient opportunity to meet with clients: In jail, there were limited visiting hours; at the compound, there was little time before and after hearings, and little privacy due to the constant presence

of agents. There were seventeen cases for each attorney, and the plea offer was good for only seven days. In addition, criminal attorneys are not familiar with immigration work, but had to make do since immigration lawyers were denied access to these "criminal" proceedings.

The prosecutors would not accept any changes to the plea agreement. In fact, some lawyers, seeing that many of their clients were not guilty, requested an Alford Plea, whereby defendants can plead guilty in order to accept the prosecution's offer, but without having to lie under oath and admit to something they did not do. That would not have changed the five-month sentence, but at least would have preserved the person's integrity and dignity. The proposal was rejected. Of course, if they allowed Alford Pleas to go on public record, the incongruence of the charges would be exposed and find their way into the media.

Many of these workers were sole earners begging to be deported, desperate to feed their families, for whom every day counted. "If you want to see your children or don't want your family to starve, sign here"—that is what their deal amounted to. Their plea agreement was coerced.

We began week two on Monday, May 19. Those interpreters who left after the first week were spared the sentencing hearings that went on through Thursday. Those who came in fresh the second week were spared the jail visits over the weekend. Those of us who stayed both weeks came back from the different jails burdened by a close personal contact that judges and prosecutors do not get to experience: each individual tragedy multiplied by 306 cases.

We had seen attorneys hold back tears and then weep alongside their clients. We would see judges, prosecutors, clerks, and marshals do their duty, sometimes with a heavy heart,

sometimes at least with mixed feelings, but always with a particular solemnity not accorded to the common criminals we all are used to encountering in the judicial system. Everyone was extremely professional and outwardly appreciative of the interpreters. Still, that Monday morning I felt down-trodden by the sheer magnitude of the events. Unexpectedly, a sentencing hearing lifted my spirits.

I decided to do sentences with a judge I knew from real criminal trials in Iowa. The defendants were brought in five at a time, because there was not enough room for ten. The judge verified that they still wanted to plead guilty, and asked counsel to confirm their plea agreement. The defense attorney said that he had expected a much lower sentence, but that he was forced to accept the agreement in the best interest of his clients. That vague objection, which was all that the attorney could put on record, spoke volumes. After accepting the plea agreement and before imposing sentence, the judge gave the defendants the right of allocution. Most of them chose not to say anything, but one said humbly: "Your honor, you know that we are here because of the need of our families. I beg that you find it in your heart to send us home before too long, because we have a responsibility to our children, to give them an education, clothing, shelter, and food."

The good judge explained that unfortunately he was not free to depart from the sentence provided for by their plea agreement. His hands were tied, but in closing he said very deliberately: "I appreciate the fact that you are very hardworking people, who have come here to do no harm. And I thank you for coming to this country to work hard. Unfortunately, you broke a law in the process, and now I have the obligation to give you this sentence. But I hope that the U.S. government has at least treated you kindly and with respect, and that this time goes by quickly for you, so that soon you may be reunited with your family and friends."

The defendants thanked him, and I saw their faces change from shame to admiration, their dignity restored.

Before the judge left that afternoon, I went up to him.

"Your honor," I said, "I am concerned from my attorney-client interviews that many of these people are clearly not guilty, and yet they have no choice but to plead out."

He understood immediately and, not surprisingly, the seasoned U.S. District Court judge spoke as someone who had already wrestled with all the angles. He said: "You know, I don't agree with any of this or with the way it is being done. In fact, I ruled in a previous case that to charge somebody with identity theft, the person had to at least know of the real owner of the Social Security number. But I was reversed in another district and yet upheld in a third." The charge of identity theft seemed from the beginning incongruous to me as an informed, impartial layperson, but now a U.S. District Court judge agreed. As we bade each other farewell, I kept thinking of what he said. I soon realized that he had given me, as it were, the last piece of the puzzle.

It worked like this. By handing down the inflated charge of "aggravated identity theft," which carries a mandatory minimum sentence of two years in prison, the government forced the defendants into pleading guilty to the lesser charge and accepting five months in jail. Clearly, without the inflated charge, the government had no bargaining leverage, because the lesser charge by itself, using a false Social Security number, carries only a discretionary sentence of zero-to-six months. The judges would be free to impose sentences within those guidelines, depending on the circumstances of each case and any prior record. Virtually all the defendants would have received only probation and been immediately deported. In fact, the government's offer at the higher end of the guidelines (one month shy of

the maximum sentence) was indeed no bargain. What is worse, the inflated charge reduced the judges to mere bureaucrats, pronouncing the same litany over and over for the record in order to legalize the proceedings, but having absolutely no discretion or decision-making power after the plea agreement was signed. As a citizen, I want our judges, not immigration agents, to administer justice.

As it was, the process resembled a lottery of justice. If the Social Security number belonged to someone else, you were charged with identity theft and went to jail. If by luck it was a vacant number, you would get only Social Security fraud and were released for deportation. In this manner, out of 297 who were charged on time, 270 went to jail.

Bothered by the arbitrariness of that heavier charge, I went back to the ICE Search Warrant Application, and what I found was astonishing. On February 20, 2008, ICE agents received Social Security "no match" information for 737 employees, including 147 using numbers confirmed as invalid (never issued to a person) and 590 using a valid Social Security number but that "did not match the name of the employee reported by Agriprocessors." The application said, "This analysis would not account for the possibility that a person may have falsely used the identity of an actual person's name and SSN." ICE agents checked Accurant, the powerful identity database used by law enforcement, and found that 983 employees that year had non-matching Social Security numbers. Then they conducted a search of the FTC Consumer Sentinel Network for reporting incidents of identity theft. "The search revealed that a person who was assigned *one* of the Social Security numbers used by *an employee* of Agriprocessors has reported his/her identity being stolen." (The emphasis is mine.) That is, out of 983 Social Security numbers, only one happened to coincide by chance with a reported identity theft. The mass charge of

identity theft was clearly unfounded, and the raid a fishing expedition. In fact, a petition to review the identity theft charge is now before the Supreme Court.

But with the promise of faster deportation, their ignorance of the legal system, and the limited opportunity to consult with counsel before arraignment, all the workers, without exception, were led to waive their Fifth Amendment right to a grand jury indictment on felony charges. Waiting for a grand jury meant months in jail on an immigration detainer, without the possibility of bail. So the attorneys could not recommend it as a defense strategy. Similarly, defendants have the right to a status hearing before a judge to determine probable cause within ten days of arraignment, but their plea agreement offer from the government was good for only . . . seven days. Passing it up meant risking two years in jail. As a result, the frivolous charge of identity theft was assured never to undergo the judicial test of probable cause. Not only were defendants and judges bound to accept the plea agreement, there was also absolutely no defense strategy available to counsel. Once the inflated charge was handed down, all the pieces fell into place. Even the court was banking on it when it agreed to participate, because if a good number of defendants asked for a grand jury or trial, the system would be overwhelmed. In short, "fast-tracking" had worked like a dream.

It is no secret that the Postville ICE raid was a pilot operation, to be replicated elsewhere. Never before has illegal immigration been criminalized in this fashion. It is no longer enough to deport them: We first have to put them in chains.

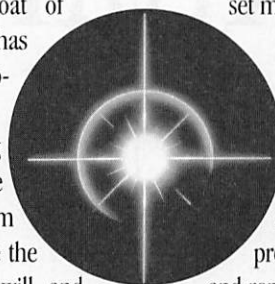
A line was crossed in Postville.

I hope the next time my fellow interpreters hear the buzzwords "Continuity of Operations," they will at least know what they are getting into. ♦

— Man's Destiny —

When men* awaken to their true potential they will be amazed by the range of creativity which will become theirs. The audacity of their thought will at first astound them, and will lead them into enterprises all but unimaginable today. Men will find that they are, in truth, potential Gods. From the deep slumber of the past men will awaken and slough off the heavy coat of ignorance which for long has delayed their forward progress. Thus will it be.

Man is now at the turning point in his long adventure in life on planet Earth. From now on, all progress will be the result of his considered will and reason. No longer will greed and competition impede his journey to perfection; no longer will war, and want for millions, degrade and stain his path; never again will lawlessness and separation rule on planet Earth.



The path to such perfection is well trodden by us and we have set in place the needed landmarks: men must see humanity as One, brothers and sisters, sons of the One Father.

Freedom and Justice are essential to all, everywhere, without exception, and can only be achieved by trust.

Sharing alone can create that trust, and set men on the path to their divinity.

Men, to be happy, must live within the Laws of Life: of Cause and Effect, Rebirth, Harmlessness and Sacrifice. These basic Laws are the Ancient Landmarks which protect men from self-destruction and remorse.

When Maitreya steps forward into open vision you will hear these Laws again, for they form the basis of all his teaching and the basis of all life on planet Earth.

Import

The awakening of men depends on humanity grasping the import of these Laws and their willingness and readiness to change. This present so-called civilization has 'shot its bolt', is decayed and dying, with little further to offer men than hardship and fear, and, finally, self-annihilation.

Maitreya comes to show men that they have within themselves all that it takes to become the Gods they essentially are. To show them how simple and beautiful is that way, and to inspire them to grasp and accept their destiny. Maitreya doubts not their response.

This article, published in *Share International* magazine, was written by a Master of Wisdom. The Masters, headed by Maitreya, the World Teacher, are highly advanced teachers and advisors of humanity who are planning to work openly in the world very soon.

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*men is a general term meaning humankind

By Kari Lydersen

Illustration by Cristy C. Road

Sexual Cleansing in Iraq



A YOUNG GAY MAN WAS recently arrested in Iraq for chatting with gay men by phone. Police told his father he had been released, but his body was found a few days later, blindfolded and shot in the head and rectum.

"They always shoot their gay victims in the rear end, then in the head, because they believe that all gay males actively practice sexual intercourse," wrote Ali Hili, who has lived in London for several years. Hili is the co-founder of Iraqi LGBT, which advocates for the country's lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgendered people. They face murder, wrongful arrest, torture, and brutality from government forces and militias because of their sexual orientation in what the group is calling a "campaign of sexual cleansing."

Men who are known to be gay from rumor or their appearance are in constant danger of attack, according to Hili and other members of Iraqi LGBT, which has documented at least 450 murders in Iraq based on sexual orientation since 2003. Gay men and transgender people have been burned alive, beheaded, and beaten to death by members of the police or militias,

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like Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army and the Badr Brigade of the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council, the country's primary Shiite political party. Lesbians have also been targeted to a lesser extent.

In late 2005, respected Shiite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani issued a fatwa calling for the death of gays and lesbians "in the severest way possible."

That fall, Hili and allies in Iraq set up a network of safe houses where lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender people took refuge. With funding and support from the Chicago-based Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights, Netherlands-based Hivos, and U.K.-based OutRage!, the network at its height had five safe houses in various parts of the country.

Their location was kept top secret, advertised only by word of mouth and heavily guarded. Nonetheless, residents and leaders of the houses were assassinated or threatened.

In the southern Shia city of Najaf, the thirty-four-year-old taxi driver who guarded the safe house was shot execution-style after being stopped at a police checkpoint in March 2007, according to Iraqi LGBT. The previous month, a twenty-nine-year-old gay tailor was beheaded in Karbala, and in Baghdad, a twenty-one-year-old was found dead after receiving threats and being arrested. Then, last fall, two lesbians who ran the safe house in Najaf were murdered along with a fourteen-year-old boy they had rescued from the sex trade. In all, at least twenty-six people associated with Iraqi LGBT have been killed.

Now three safe houses have been closed because the group doesn't have the funds to keep them open. That leaves two safe houses in Baghdad currently sheltering about forty residents.

Sean Casey, director of Global HIV Initiatives at the Heartland Alliance and Iraqi LGBT's liaison, said that former residents of the safe houses were "left to fend for themselves on the street" after the houses

closed. "Several of these people were subsequently killed, while a number of others have been forced into prostitution to survive."

On May 29, Iraqi LGBT members were meeting in Najaf to plan a new safe house when police descended on their gathering and arrested a lesbian, two gay men, and a transgender person. A twenty-nine-year-old gay journalist named Khalil was also arrested in Baghdad in May by the Badr

Grand Ayatollah Sistani issued a fatwa calling for the death of gays and lesbians "in the severest way possible."

corps, and hasn't been heard from since. Likewise for Karrar, a twenty-two-year-old student whose sexuality became known in the community when his family discovered images and video of naked men on his cell phone.

Militias have even been using the Internet to entrap gay men. In May 2007, two gay Baghdad University students accompanied two men they'd met in an Internet chat room on a "date" to the al-Karada neighborhood. It turned out their dates were members of the Mahdi Army, who proceeded to blindfold and strip them, torture them, and interrogate them about other gay men and all the names in their cell phone memories. After pretending they would execute their victims, the Mahdi Army members left and the young men were res-

cued and eventually made it to one of the safe houses.

Now these two men, like most gay and transgender people in Iraq, know they must keep their sexuality hidden completely if they are to survive. For many residents of the safe houses who are obviously effeminate or transgender, or who are well known for their sexuality, this is impossible.

"They are easy targets for militias and extremists," says Hili.

"Nowadays, we don't dare be seen in the neighborhoods where we used to live," says a gay man named Safa who fled death threats in Najaf and went into hiding in early 2007, as quoted on the Iraqi LGBT website (<http://iraqilgbt.uk.blogspot.com>). "It is too dangerous for anyone known to be gay or to have had a homosexual past."

Some want to wait it out until things change in Iraq; others are desperately hoping to flee to Europe or the U.S. and gain asylum.

But getting asylum has been difficult to near-impossible for most Iraqis during the current war, and for LGBTs it is even harder. Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Yemen have the death penalty for same-sex acts, while neighboring Syria and Kuwait, along with Qatar, Oman, and Bahrain, imprison gays.

Iraqi LGBT has managed to help at least fifteen Iraqis relocate to the United States, especially to the Iraqi hub of Dearborn and Detroit. Others have successfully fled to Sweden, Australia, Germany, Holland, and the U.K.

In the United States, openly gay Representatives Tammy Baldwin, Democrat of Wisconsin, and Barney Frank, Democrat of Massachusetts, signed a letter to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in June 2007 urging her to demand action from Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and Iraqi President Jalal Talabani.

"In 2005, the Iraqi people adopted a constitution guaranteeing that 'every individual has the right to enjoy life, security and liberty,'" said the letter.

"Unfortunately, such promises have been particularly eroded for LGBT Iraqis, who must live in constant fear of being targeted for execution."

The State Department's response letter said its 2006 "Country Reports on Rights and Practices" had noted kidnappings and disappearances based on sexual orientation, and said the insurgency and sectarian violence

**"We are in danger
from militias,
religious extremists,
even family."**

have "complicated the Iraqi government's human rights performance."

A spokesman for Frank's office said that while the Congressman has advocated for individual LGBT asylum seekers, the Administration has not taken action in response to his letter.

Congressman Earl Blumenauer, Democrat of Oregon, an outspoken advocate of Iraqi asylum-seekers in general, introduced the Responsibility to Iraqi Refugees Act in May 2007, which would have given gay Iraqis high priority in an expanded Iraqi asylum program. Though facets of the bill were adopted in the Department of Defense Authorization Act signed by President Bush in January 2008, the provision for gay asylum-seekers was not included.

Under Saddam Hussein's oppressive but largely secular rule, life was relatively tolerable for LGBT Iraqis. There were gay

nightclubs in Baghdad, and people weren't generally attacked because of their sexuality. As Saddam made an effort to increase his popularity by becoming more religious in the 1990s, he closed down gay bars and in 2001 outlawed sodomy. But for many LGBT people, life still continued safely on the down low.

"People stayed up late, you'd go out and do things, it was not perfect, most people didn't have jobs, but still there was a certain amount of stability and safety," says Hili. "People could go out in the street without fearing for their life, just like any other country. Now people have no normal safety."

The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq in a 2006 human rights report documented a climate of "impunity and lawlessness" in regard to attacks on Iraqi gays. It catalogued twelve murders of gays in the eight months after al-Sistani's fatwa. It said numbers were likely underreported since "families are unwilling to admit that targeted members were homosexual for fear of further abuse."

The report described the March 2006 case of a twenty-nine-year-old Baghdad man who was kidnapped and his family threatened for allowing him to lead a gay lifestyle. Though the family paid the ransom, the man was found tortured and murdered. It also reported that a man was hanged by his father because he was gay—an "honor crime" that went unpunished by the courts.

The report says gay men are also disproportionately singled out for harassment and intimidation by extremists enforcing religious rules of traditional dress. (Such enforcement included the murder of a tennis coach and two players, not necessarily gay, for wearing shorts. Women also reported feeling pressured to wear headscarves as a matter of survival.)

"We are in danger from militias, religious extremists, even family," Hili says. "The problem is no one is sympathizing with us, no one is taking a stand for us, not even the Communist

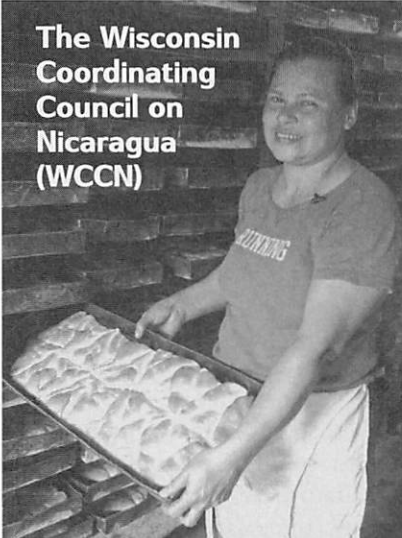
Party or any religious parties. We have even tried to get support from groups that support human rights in general, but when it comes to LGBT rights everyone is running away because they think they will lose their popularity when they advocate our defense. They may sympathize in theory, but they believe Iraq is still not ready to have LGBT rights."

Hili, who worked in radio in Baghdad since he was fifteen and also did TV production in Dubai and Beirut, longs to return to Iraq. He hasn't been back since the invasion, because the situation is too dangerous.

"It's my dream to go back to Iraq one day," he says, "to help build things from the ground up."

He may want to wait awhile.

On September 25, the coordinator of Iraqi LGBT, a university student named Bashar, was assassinated in a Baghdad barbershop. Militia members burst in and sprayed him with bullets. ♦



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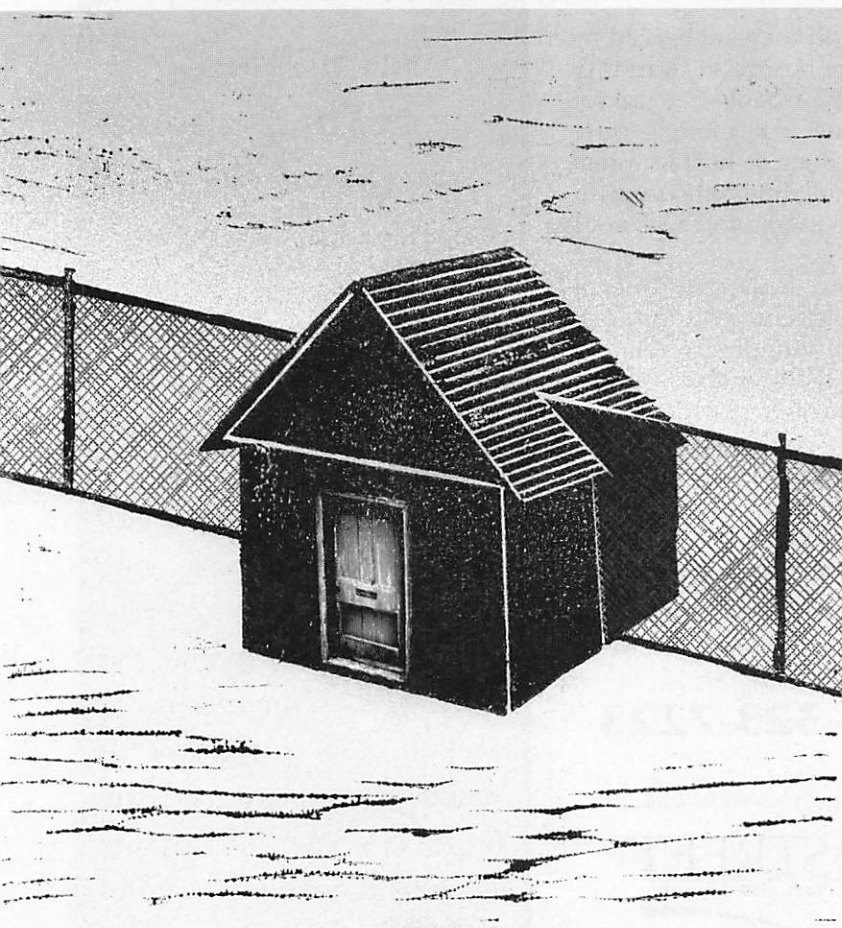
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By Tim Vanderpool

Illustration by Matthew Leake

Borderline Discrimination



ELOISA TAMEZ WAS A TODDLER the last time Uncle Sam tried taking her land. It was the 1930s, and the federal government planned to erect a flood levee along the Rio Grande River. Like many other area landowners, her family had occupied this thirsty stretch of South Texas for a couple of centuries.

But such details mattered little to federal survey teams at the time: The levee was muscled through, and none of the struggling, mostly Hispanic, farmers received a penny.

"Those living around that river have always been simple people," says the professor of nursing, who is part Lipan Apache and traces her holdings back to an eighteenth century land grant once spanning nearly 13,000 acres. "They're just people who carved a living off the land as best they could. But the government took advantage of them."

Now when Tamez looks across her remaining property—three little acres squeezed up against that levee, just a mile north of the Mexican line—she sees history repeating itself. In August 2007, she was approached by a U.S. border official, who informed

Tim Vanderpool is a Tucson-based freelance writer who covers border and environmental issues.

her that the government might want to build a fence that would essentially split her property in two. When she balked, he raised the stakes.

"He said, 'You know about eminent domain, don't you?' " Tamez recalls. " 'If the government needs the land, we'll take it.' "

In December, she was among 135 small property owners, universities, and municipalities along the South Texas border that received letters demanding government access. More than half ignored the threatening missive. Soon, they received notice that condemnation proceedings were under way. A few, including Tamez, sued the government.

Although this enormous fence project sprawls across a region dominated by people of color—mostly Native Americans and Hispanics—at least one minority is going largely untouched: the wealthy and well-connected. While Tamez was finally forced to allow survey teams on her property, there were no nasty letters sent to the posh golf resort right next door, no fence planned alongside its cortège of motor homes and upscale retirees.

To observers, the double standard is breathtaking.

"This is really an issue of economic justice," says Scott Nicol of No Texas Border Wall, a Rio Grande Valley group fighting the fence. "These people are losing their homes, they're losing their farmland, they're being cut off from the Rio Grande River, which is their only access to irrigable water."

But the wealthy are ignored. "There are obviously various interests involved in determining where to place the fence," says Celestino Gallejos, an attorney with Texas Rio-Grande Legal Aid, a nonprofit assisting the low-income landowners. "It depends upon who is friends with the Bush Administration."

While this fight feels raw, it's actually been simmering since 2006, when Congress charged the department (which includes the border patrol) with building 700 miles of barriers along the U.S.-Mexico bor-

der. The Secure Fence Act also designated precisely where that fencing would go.

But then Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff punted. Amid growing complaints about the project's slow pace, he reduced the

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barrier to 370 miles and blamed the hold-up on budget constraints. Along with his changes, however, Chertoff failed to mention where the reduced fence would go—an omission that left miles of room for political fiddling. (In September, the DHS announced that those constraints—and land acquisition hurdles—might keep the agency from meeting its target of completing the fence by year's end.)

The Secure Fence Act isn't the only law allowing Homeland Security to write its own rules. The Real ID Act of 2005 grants Chertoff the ability to waive the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act, and a host of other

laws that might slow border barrier construction.

In South Texas, dotted by dirt-poor *colonias* and a thriving cross-border culture, the fence has become a symbol of federal bullying, and for residents, a painful reminder of who's truly on the losing end of our immigration policies.

The Kickapoo, Lipan Apaches, and the Jumano Apaches are clustered around small towns such as Presidio, which is slated for a fence.

To Presidio-area resident Enrique Madrid, a Jumano, that's just another insult under the guise of border security. "Traditionally, every little border village has had a crossing with its neighbor village in Mexico," he says. "They were legal ports of entry, but they were shut down after 9/11. So now to see your family who's 100 yards away on the Mexican side, you have to drive. It takes us two or three hours to drive the 100 yards we used to walk across."

But the losers do not include the River Bend Resort, next door to Eloisa Tamez. Or the properties controlled by oil baron Ray Hunt, a billionaire who recently donated \$35 million toward G. W. Bush's pending Presidential library.

Attempts to obtain comment from resort owner John Allburg or from Hunt Consolidated Inc. were unsuccessful. But Homeland Security spokeswoman Laura Keehner denies any favoritism. "In many cases in Texas, fencing decisions have not even been made," she says. "Therefore, how could somebody come to the conclusion that political decisions were made? "We rely on our boots on the ground, our Customs and Border Protection officers, to help us identify where the greatest need is. They know tactically where it would make the most sense to build the fence."

Representative Raul Grijalva, Democrat of Arizona, calls the Homeland Security approach "ham-fisted." He adds, "There has been no consideration for local communities,

no looking at alternatives. . . . The only conclusion you can reach is that these are political decisions.”

Brownsville is perched on the southeastern tip of Texas and boasts a deep-water port, thanks to a twenty-mile canal reaching up from the Gulf of Mexico. Its 139,000 residents, more than 90 percent of them Hispanic, carry on vibrant, cross-border commerce with their sister city of Matamoros, just across the Rio Grande in Mexico.

Pat Ahumada is Brownsville's mayor, and a lifelong Republican who left the party when it turned immigration into a racially tinged wedge issue. Now he's fighting Homeland Security plans for a fence that would ruin his city's hopes for a riverwalk and further disrupt that crucial, cross-border trade. Ahumada and other regional leaders formed the Texas Border Coalition, and in May they filed a class action lawsuit accusing the government of failing to negotiate with landowners, including cities, counties, and even the University of Texas-Brownsville.

“We mayors along the border are against illegal immigration, against drug trafficking, against terrorism,” he says. “But you need to apply individual solutions to individual cases.”

Brownsville officials have proposed several alternatives to the fence, such as creating a weir, which would broaden the river by 300 feet and make illegal crossings more difficult. Ahumada also argues for simply deploying more border patrol agents. But he says the Department of Homeland Security is unwilling to budge, even though the Secure Fence Act requires consultations. “They're saying, ‘Get out of our way. We're going to build it whether you like it or not.’”

That attitude is not limited to cities like Brownsville. Homeland Security has reported setting up numerous town hall meetings to discuss the fence with local officials. And spokespeople have supplied reporters with lists of those gather-

ings. But apparently many of these meetings never occurred.

These so-called phantom meetings became the subject of a February hearing before the U.S. House Appropriations subcommittee overseeing Homeland Security budgets. “We were told that the (Customs and Border Protection) had held eighteen town hall meetings that, on investigation, turned out to be meals in restaurants and phone calls,” said

“They're saying,
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or not.’”

Chad Foster, the mayor of Eagle Pass, Texas, and chairman of the Texas Border Coalition. Plans for Foster's community include a fence dissecting the Eagle Pass Municipal Golf Course.

In fact, it appears that no meetings were held in the Rio Grande Valley at all, despite Homeland Security claims to the contrary. The town hall meetings “consisted of a Congressman calling a judge, or somebody having coffee in a diner,” says Adrienne Evans, co-founder of No Wall-Big Bend, a group fighting the fence near Big Bend National Park. “According to the

DHS, a town hall meeting for all of our area of Big Bend supposedly occurred on May 15, 2007. But that's a bunch of garbage. I talked to our city officials and there was no meeting.”

Nonetheless, Homeland Security spokeswoman Keehner stands by the published meeting schedule. “To my knowledge, everything that we made public, based on meetings, actually occurred and did happen,” she says. “Now, whether an individual wasn't invited who wanted to be, I don't know. Whether they were upset that they weren't in on the discussion, I don't know.”

Representative Grijalva decided to hold his own April hearing at the University of Texas-Brownsville. Attending were the fence's two biggest Congressional proponents, Representative Duncan Hunter, Republican of California, and Colorado Representative Tom Tancredo, a fellow Republican and short-lived Presidential contender who has forged a career from attacking illegal immigration.

The pro-wall Congressmen were not warmly received, and Tancredo dropped snide comments about “landowners' multiculturalist views toward borders” that were complicating border security. “If you don't like the idea . . . maybe you should consider building the fence around the northern part of your city,” Tancredo told the Brownsville audience.

That statement outraged Mayor Ahumada.

“It's ludicrous,” he said later. “Tancredo basically admitted that he's a racist.”

Grijalva says people will remember “how property was cut in half, right-of-ways taken with no discussion at all.”

For her part, Eloisa Tamez remembers all too well. Already, a judge has forced her to unlock a gate and allow federal surveyors onto her property. Now she says the stakes couldn't be higher: “I'll tell you what is likely. What's likely is the death of a people, and the end of a way of life.” ♦

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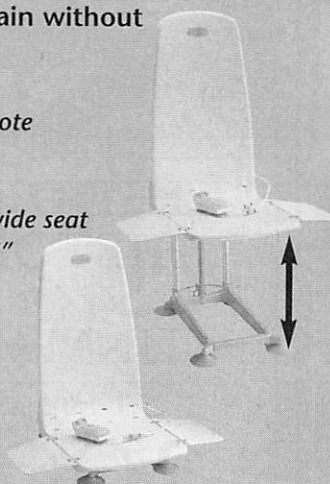
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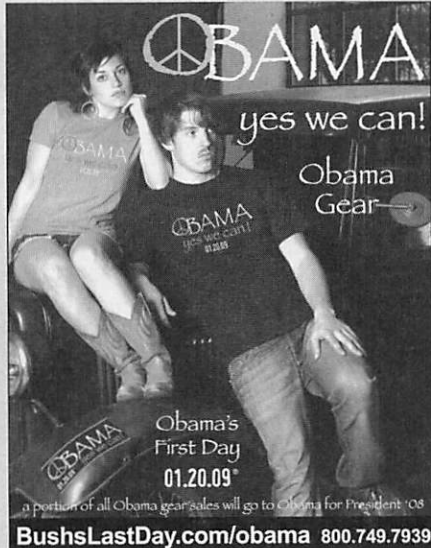
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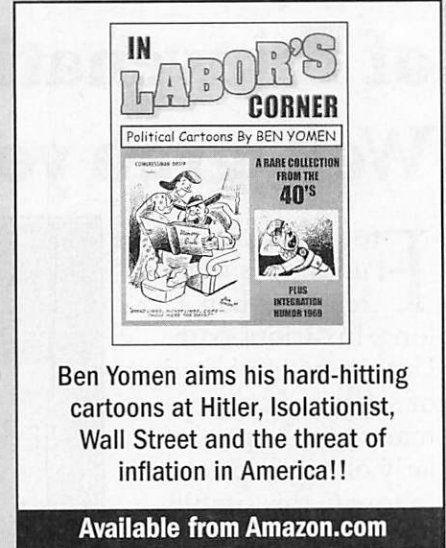
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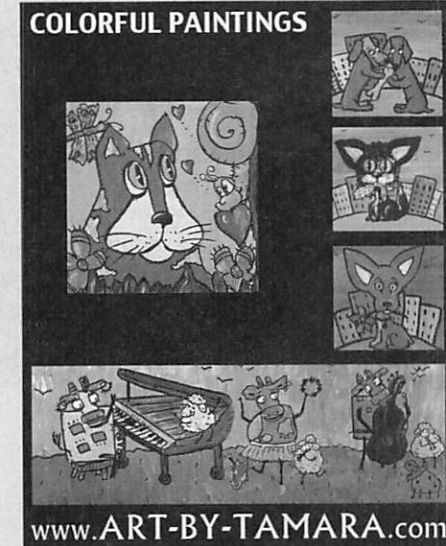
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THE PROGRESSIVE INTERVIEW

by Marc Eisen

Michael Pollan

Michael Pollan has got people talking. His recent books, *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* and *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto*, have captured the public imagination, setting off countless coffee shop discussions, dinnertime arguments, and oh-so-many blog posts.

Even more impressively, his exploration of modern-day agriculture and the dysfunctional American diet has prompted his readers to look at their own eating habits with a new sense of understanding and often a desire for change.

Pollan has taken Wendell Berry's memorable phrase "eating is an agricultural act" one step further. "It's a political act as well," Pollan advises.

Mark Eisen writes about food, political, and business topics from Madison, Wisconsin.

A lot of people agree. The alternative food movement—organic farming, local food systems, sustainable agriculture, and more—is burgeoning today because, one family at a time, consumers are backing away from the global food network. Instead, they patronize farmers' markets, buy food shares from CSA (community-supported agriculture) farms, and favor grocers who sell local meat and produce.

Pollan's books are essential reading in this movement. He details the importance of grazing to a sustainable farm's operation and the problems of corn as the cornerstone of U.S. agribusiness. But most of all he gracefully chronicles his own journey of discovery in a food world where, amidst \$32 billion in advertising, baleful health consequences are carefully obscured.

Pollan's topics include a thorough demolition of "nutritionism," the reigning health ideology that offers dizzying and ever-changing advice on polyunsaturated this and low-fat that, often in the cause of selling highly processed food products.

A good diet is really pretty simple, Pollan declares: Avoid "edible foodlike substances." Instead, eat real food. "Not too much. Mostly plants. That, more or less, is the short answer to the supposedly incredibly complicated and confusing question of what we humans should eat in order to be maximally healthy."

I caught up with Pollan two days after he returned from a book tour in New Zealand and Australia. At fifty-three, he looked fit but tired from the travel. He lives on a leafy avenue in Berkeley with his wife, painter Judith Belzer, and their fifteen-year-old son. He teaches journalism at the University of California-Berkeley, after a ten-year stint as an editor at *Harper's Magazine*. We talked over cups of Darjeeling tea in his kitchen. Here is the edited and condensed interview.

Q • You argue that consumer ignorance is essential for maintaining the industrial agriculture system.

Michael Pollan: If people could see how their food is produced, they would change how they eat. My interest in the topic traces to two moments, in 2000, when I learned how our food is produced.

One was driving down Route 5 in California and passing the Harris ranch, which is a huge feedlot right on the highway. It's a stunning landscape. I had never seen anything quite like that.

Miles of manure-encrusted land teeming with thousands of animals and a giant mountain of corn and a giant mountain of manure. And a stench you can smell two miles before you get there.

Most feedlots are hidden away on the High Plains. This one happens to be very accessible. Then I visited an industrialized potato farm in Idaho and saw how freely pesticides were used. The farmers had little patches of potatoes by their houses that were organic. They couldn't eat their field potatoes out of the ground because they had so many systemic pesticides. They had to be stored for six months to off-gas the toxins.

These two things changed the way I ate. I don't buy industrial potatoes, and I don't eat feedlot meat.

It's only our ignorance of how our food is grown that permits this to go on. Most people, if they went to the feedlot or to the slaughterhouse and saw how the animals are raised and killed, would lose their appetite for that food.

The industry knows this. It works so hard not to label where the food comes from, how it's made, and whether or not there are GMOs [genetically modified organisms] in it, because they know very well from their own research that people don't want food grown that way.

Q: The national organic rules, which took effect in 2002, are credited with creating the boom in organic food sales. Yet you seem skeptical.

Pollan: Something was gained and something was lost when the federal government defined what "organic" meant. The rules were drawn in a way to make organic friendly to large corporations looking to do organic as cheaply as possible and on as large a scale as possible.

For example, the fight over whether you should really require pasturing for dairy so the cows can eat grass: They drew those rules so broadly that companies like Aurora and Horizon could slip through with very large industrial feedlots.

An "organic feedlot" should be a contradiction in terms, but it's not under the rules. They really wanted to make it possible to have a mirrored food supply. So you could take everything in the supermarket and make its organic doppelganger. Is that a bad thing or a good thing? It's a mixed thing.

The Chinese organic is a real question. First, how organic is it? You hear stories that make you wonder. The other issue is what you can do within the organic rules and still be sending contaminated product. Because the soil is so badly contaminated in China, even if they don't put chemicals on their fields for three years [as U.S. organic rules require for certification], the heavy metals are still there.

So what the consumer thinks they're buying—organic food—may not be what they're really getting from China.

Q: The case is made that Wal-Mart's entry into organic sales won't hurt organic farmers, but will help the movement by creating more customers for co-ops and natural food stores.

Pollan: I hope that's true. But Wal-Mart is one of the reasons we grow beef the way we do in this country, which is to say with brutal efficiency and lots of pharmaceuticals. Wal-Mart's focus on low price tended to mean squeezing their suppliers very, very hard.

Wal-Mart isn't doing that yet with organic. But long term, that's what I would worry about: that they would force organic prices down not by being more efficient in distribution but through pressuring suppliers.

Q: The organic folks I talk with say that Wal-Mart sells only the most popular organic items and doesn't offer the wide selection that serious organic shoppers want.

Pollan: Wal-Mart feeds the bottom third of the population. So they're not competing with Whole Foods or the corner co-op. It is bringing more people into organic.

The other virtue of Wal-Mart getting into organic is the education factor. There are lots of people in this country who don't know what organic is, and they will learn about it from Wal-Mart.

When I first started talking about the industrialization of organics, there really was a sense that "big organic" would crush "little organic." But I don't think that's what is happening.

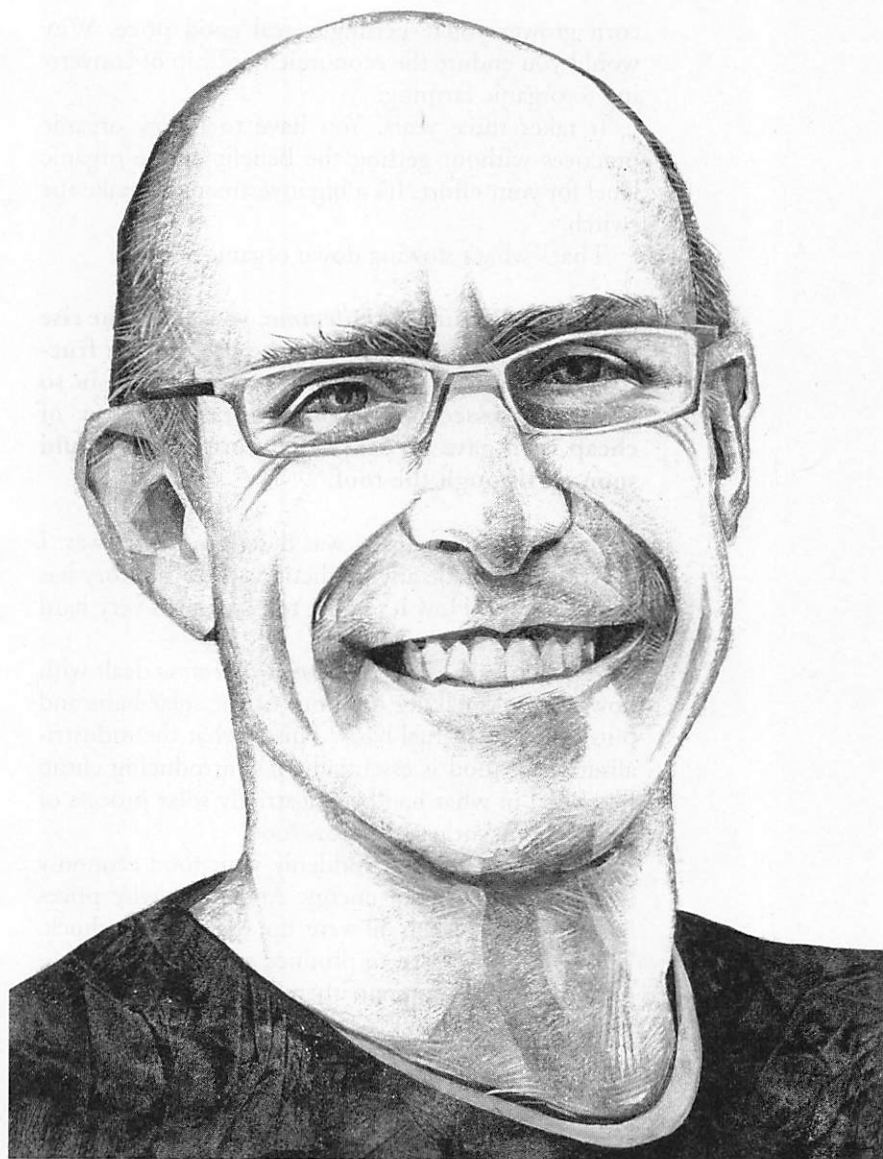
They are very separate worlds. There is overlap, but "little organic" is like these smart independent bookstores. They figured out a way to be in a different business. They do events and hand-sell books and have a whole conversation about books that Barnes & Noble and Amazon can't do.

In the same way, you see the really entrepreneurial farmers figuring out they don't have to compete with Whole Foods and certainly not Wal-Mart. They can offer a higher level of quality and more personal attention through the whole CSA relationship and by selling at farmers' markets now.

Q: *Newsweek* ran a story arguing that the organic market was leveling off because it's just too expensive in an era of higher food prices. Do you agree?

Pollan: No, I think it's still growing quickly. The demand is still there.

What's slowing the growth is that there is less incentive for farmers to convert to organic because conventional prices are so high. If you're a wheat or



SARA TYSON

“I really have a lot of faith that consumers can change things. But I don't think you can completely reform the food system by just voting with your fork.”

corn grower you're getting a real good price. Why would you endure the economic hardship of converting to organic farming?

It takes three years. You have to follow organic practices without getting the benefit of the organic label for your effort. It's a big investment to make the switch.

That's what's slowing down organic growth.

Q: In *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, you detail the rise of U.S. corn production and the use of high fructose corn syrup as the ubiquitous sweetener in so much processed food. But your discussion of cheap corn gave no sense that corn prices would soon go through the roof.

Pollan: As a journalist, I was describing what was. I don't think I made any predictions. But the story has changed a lot. How it's going to play out is very hard to predict.

A good deal of *The Omnivore's Dilemma* dealt with how we took making food out of the solar basis and put it on a fossil-fuel basis. This is what the industrialization of food is essentially. It's introducing cheap fossil fuel in what had been a strictly solar process of using photosynthesis to grow food.

When you do that, suddenly your food economy is dependent on your energy. And that's why prices have gone up. When oil went up, that was the shock. That, and using corn to produce ethanol.

At this very moment, there are executives sitting around the table at Coca-Cola, saying the price of high fructose corn syrup is spiking and will probably stay there for a while. "Do we shrink the portion size, or do we raise the price? Do we go back to the days before supersizing and sell eight-ounce Coca-Colas instead of twenty-ounce Coca-Colas?"

I hope they shrink the portion size. That would be good for public health.

Q: Does the world have a food shortage now, or is it more a problem of distribution and changing diets?

Pollan: The spot shortages around the world are really not so much about supply as the price. There are really high prices, and that's driven by ethanol, high oil prices, and the growing demand for grain in Asia.

The whole free trade regime around grains is trembling right now. Countries are recognizing that you don't want to lose control of your ability to feed your population. You don't want the price of food in your country to be dependent on decisions made in Wall Street or the White House.

Trade globalization has forced cheap American

and Brazilian grains into all of these countries. As a consequence, they've lost the ability to grow their own grain.

Now they wish those farmers were there.

Q: You seemed to struggle with the concept of vegetarianism and arguments against meat eating.

Pollan: I'm a pretty harsh critic of 99 percent of America's meat system, but there is that 1 percent I think is important to defend, because first there are good environmental reasons to eat meat in a limited way.

If you believe strongly in building up local food economies, there are places where meat is the best way to get protein off of the land. It's too hilly, too dry. Having animals is very important for sustainable agriculture. If you're going to have animals on the farm, they're going to die eventually, and you're going to eat them.

But I have enormous respect for vegetarians. They're further ahead than most of us. They've gone through the thought process in making their eating choices. They've just come out in a different place than I have.

I think we're going to focus on meat-eaters the way we have on SUV drivers. There will be a lot of pressure and education to show that a heavy meat diet is a big contributor to climate change, and that there are many good reasons to eat less meat.

Q: How is meat consumption tied to climate change?

Pollan: In several ways. First, it's fossil-fuel intensive. If you are feeding animals grain on feedlots you are growing that grain with fossil-fuel fertilizers and pesticides. You are moving that grain around the country to feedlots. You're moving the meat around the country.

It's a very inefficient way to feed ourselves. It takes ten pounds of grain to get one pound of beef, seven pounds of grain to get one pound of pork, and two pounds of grain to get one pound of chicken.

There is an equity issue, too. If we really have a limited amount of grain to feed the world, and we're feeding 60 percent of it to animals, and another 10 percent to our cars, that's going to be hard to defend in the future.

Q: To a striking degree, you argue that individuals in their daily lives can make a difference.

Pollan: I really have a lot of faith—and I know that it's considered naive by some people on the left—that

consumers can change things. I have seen too many cases of what happens when consumers decide to inflect their buying decisions with their moral and political values. It brings about change.

The food industry is remarkably skittish. They're terrified of food scares and food fads, both of which can cost them billions overnight. So they're actually more responsive than you would think.

It's just a matter of consumers voting with their forks for things like grass-fed meat and producers hearing that market signal. But I don't think you can completely reform the food system by just voting with your fork.

There are policy issues, too. The Farm Bill matters greatly. So I'm not naive in thinking all of our answers lie in changes in personal behavior. The same is true of global warming. Individuals have a lot to do, but we also need public solutions. You can't have one without the other.

Q: How is climate change a crisis of lifestyle and character?

Pollan: Look, 70 percent of economic activity in this country is consumer—it's our purchasing decisions. That is the economy. We are implicated in these

problems, and we have to recognize that. It's our lifestyles; it's how we've organized our cities and the countryside. It's the size of our houses and how we heat our houses. It's all these things. This is global warming.

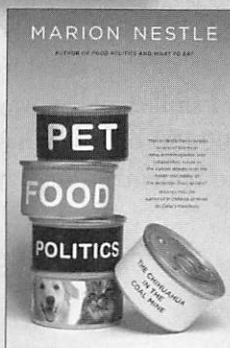
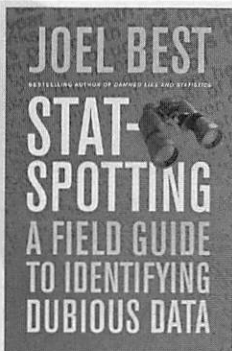
We can look at supranational institutions to create a new set of rules for this economy. But I don't think that will happen in the absence of people discovering that they can change their lives.

I really believe in what Wendell Berry said in the '70s—that the environmental crisis is a crisis of character. It's really about how we live.

Q: Are people getting it?

Pollan: On food I have a lot of optimism. I see evidence that people are changing the way they consume. I don't foresee the industrial food system going away. I see it shrinking.

One of the powerful things about the food issue is that people feel empowered by it. There are so many areas of our life where we feel powerless to change things, but your eating issues are really primal. You decide every day what you're going to put in your body—and what you refuse to put in your body. That's politics at its most basic. ♦



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Poem

Upon Waking Up Black in Henniker, New Hampshire

(4 Judith Vollmer)

1.

I wake up in a New England motel room.
I have come to get lost in poetry. It is too
early to look for a compass. I have separation

anxiety from my mattress. I look for my cell phone
to see what time it is. I look for my cell phone
because the battery in my watch has died.

Everything dies—but you knew that. It's 6:52 AM
according to the phone. I climb back into bed.
I have anxiety from my mattress—

separation. I tell myself there is still more time
for sleep. I am lying to myself. Everybody
lies, but then again, you knew that.

Green of spring glows through my window.
The sky is an ocean with clouds as sailing
ships. My toes kiss the cool of the

blue gray speckled floor. My arms hug clothes
that hang on the edge of clean. I sniff and
sniff and sniff. I am decidedly funky

but not irreparably so. I zombie-walk to the bathroom
to shower and answer the call. I carry along
the essentials: towel, toothpaste, soap

washcloth, mirror, shaver. Water on: I edify
all my most valuable players. Water off:
I drip and dab and dash.

2.

I remember flying into Manchester Airport and
thinking New Hampshire looked like a
giant green afro from the sky, and I

loved this airborne vision—trees that look like no
one was ever lynched from them—or whipped
or burned, or cut. Though I know this isn't

true, when I walk through Henniker's hurryless
hillsides, it feels like I'm massaging the
overburdened temples of the earth.

3.

How is it possible I will forget the pleasure of
this day? You know I will. Everything
you know. Still I wish it were

possible to hold on. I wonder: why is it
that no one ever suffers from post
traumatic happiness? Or ever

flashes back to unbearable joy and has to
seek immediate treatment? Today two
white men in a truck with gun racks

stopped so I could cross the street—almost
as if it wasn't the law—almost as if
they didn't have to, and

no nooses hung from tailgates. No one
had to be dredged up from the
bottom of the river.

They smiled until I smiled. They waved until
I waved. It is 11:00 PM on a Wednesday—
yes, I would like to remember this day.

—Truth Thomas

Truth Thomas is a musician and poet, born in Knoxville, Tennessee, and raised in Washington, D.C. Thomas is the author of two collections of poetry: "Party of Black" (Flipped Eye/Mouthmark, 2006) and "A Day of Presence" (Flipped Eye Publishing, 2008).

CoverGirl Ellen



Recently CoverGirl, the beauty industry giant, announced that it was hiring Ellen DeGeneres, beloved daytime talk show host, to be the face of its next advertising campaign. Thankfully it was not the same week as the Lipstick on a Pig Festival.

A vice president of Procter & Gamble, the parent company of CoverGirl, said that while Ms. DeGeneres is an authentic beauty, she appeals to consumers who are “looking not so much for a role model as a woman they can relate to both physically and emotionally.”

Ellen? As in the Ellen who challenged John McCain to walk her down the aisle, flashed her engagement rock, married her partner Portia di Rossi in a big summer wedding, and then shared her wedding album with her ooohing and aaahing audience? She is now a role model women can relate to physically and emotionally?

Let me apply my CG Pinch Me Pink Blusher!

One industry observer said Ellen’s “sexual orientation notwithstanding,” she is unlikely to alienate CG’s demographic of seventeen- to seventy-year-olds. CG must also be hoping for some crossover to the huge makeup-using drag queen market, but most queens use the really high-

end stuff that does not parch your skin to a crème brûlée top crackle. Or a shattered glass ceiling. But seventeen to seventy is a huge demographic to be unalienated by lesbian orientation.

Let me apply my CG Shocked and Awed Lashblast Mascara. It helps me not to blink.



ASHLEY HOLT

What is really happening is that the sale of mass market cosmetics is not withstanding the economic downturn. Sales plunged 6 percent in the first quarter of 2008. Analysts say that in such a climate, brands try to retool themselves to appeal to shoppers who prefer to see not Britney Spears but a glamorously packaged version of themselves. But since when did all the ladies start honoring their inner soft butch? I look forward to seeing more tuxedo variants, sensible Fred Segal sneakers, and faux ties.

Let me touch up my CG She’s Just Like Me Lip Gloss.

Cosmetics marketing consultants note that women, often disenfranchised in the cosmology of cosmetics, see an approachability in Ellen. They identify with her career ups and downs and appreciate her reinvention. With her approachability comes relevance.

That certainly explains the mystery of Sarah Palin. I reapply my CG Rosetta Stone Foundation.

Just as I held my breath waiting for the California wildfires to be blamed on gay marriage, I am holding my breath, waiting for F**kus on the Family’s James Dobson’s inevitable call for a national CoverGirlcott. He will say that the use of CG products causes lesbianism. That is certainly one way to get lesbians, who generally never touch the stuff, to buy CG products.

The holidays are approaching. This season I am buying CG stocking stuffers for some of my favorite straight gal pals.

Fundamentalist women, and some men, deprived of their makeup are not a pretty sight. My own market survey shows so-called spiritual people often want this little piggy to go, not to church, but to market. Pat Robertson has a line of health products. I predict they will introduce their own beauty line: Victoria Osteen’s Secret teeth whitener, UnderArmageddon deodorant, and Rapture Raspberry Lip Gloss. ♦

Kate “Thin Skin Deep” Clinton is a humorist.

Seattle via Hollywood



HOLLYWOOD JONESES EVERY DAY for an underdog tale of unsung heroes beating astronomical odds against evil forces. So it was only a matter of time before the WTO protests in Seattle in 1999 would be transformed into a movie.

The mystery of Hollywood—and I think I’m paraphrasing George Clooney here—is that although it’s owned by the same multinational corporations that pared television news coverage of the Seattle protests to a flashy minimum, the movie industry commonly devotes its energies to fight-the-power narratives and to excoriating corporate greed. Thus we have the new semi-indie *Battle in Seattle*, choked with lefty stars and taking a righteous brickbat to the suits who toxify our water, kill our wilderness, and melt our ice-caps—all for a quarterly profit increase.

Michael Atkinson is the author of six books, including “Exile Cinema: Filmmakers at Work Beyond Hollywood,” “Flickipedia,” and an upcoming novel, “Hemingway Deadlights.”

By Michael Atkinson

So much full-throated, sign-waving earnestness can be tiresome, of course, and I fully expect *Battle in Seattle* to be summarily dissed and dismissed by what remains of American mainstream film critics. Written and directed by a young Irish-born actor, Stuart Townsend, the film is a classic ensemble-piece portrait of recent history, not unlike Tim Robbins’s *Cradle Will Rock* but without the satiric bite.

Familiar with what Gore Vidal calls “the United States of Amnesia,” Townsend presumes we know nothing, and hits us out of the gate with a furious direct-address montage, complete with maps and figures, of what the WTO is. This tack is taken throughout the film, and it’s vividly appropriate: Going in, we don’t know much about the GATT or the WTO or the World Bank, as their global machinations are, for the most part, performed behind closed doors.

After his set up, Townsend lays out his mixed-and-matched quilt of characters: André Benjamin, Martin

Henderson, Michelle Rodriguez, and Jennifer Carpenter are the fresh-faced protest organizers; Ray Liotta is Seattle's hair-pulling Mayor Jim Tobin; soulful foreigners Isaach de Bankolé and Rade Serbedzija play diplomats in town to plead for WTO funding; Connie Nielsen is a hard-headed TV reporter; Woody Harrelson is a front-line Seattle cop and father-to-be, with Charlize Theron as his expectant retail-clerk wife. The timeline is carefully historic, and Townsend takes pains not to glorify the anarchists who grabbed more than their fair share of TV airtime because of the massive property destruction they caused.

Battle in Seattle is fraught with cliché and character-arc tedium. But who cares? The full-on protest combat and rioting and astonishing police brutality of the first two days of the conference are portrayed in blood-pressure-spiking detail, both in reenactments (edited for maximum breathlessness) and in archival news footage, much of which we never saw before on national news outlets. However much we saw, we never saw all of this before, shaped into a temporal continuum, and accumulating with terrifying moral weight.

The middle section of the film,



comprised of one chilling, endless combat between peaceful protesters and cops in riot gear, is all the film Townsend really needed to make. How did this chaos, this level of bloodshed, this degree of head-battering, illegal incarceration, and impromptu torture occur in this country? Once Theron catches an offhand billy club stab to the belly and begins spitting blood in the tear gas haze, Townsend's movie reaches the necessary level of outrage.

If only it could stay there—the characters' mundane stories are never as electrifying as the full scale of the injustice around them. But political protests, though they may inspire feverish passion, rarely make cohesive feature films. Only 1970's woeful youth flick *The Strawberry Statement* comes to mind as a precedent. Documentaries, like the mesmerizing portrait of the Tiananmen Square protests, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace* (1995), may be the preferable form—the Seattle news footage alone, assembled chronologically, would make for a more upsetting experience than Townsend's archly written web of melodramas.

Battle in Seattle's happy ending is another sad concession to its imagined audience, which cannot, it is thought, consider spending a ten-spot at the movies if there were a chance that they'd be challenged or depressed by the experience.

But perhaps this concession will get more people to see how violently repressive our system remains more than forty years since the Watts riots.

If you were in Seattle in 1999, or for that matter in St. Paul during the 2008 Republican National Convention, you have this knowledge in your blood.

Now, the rest of us may get a taste, and hopefully not forget. ♦



Zakaria's Bad Timing

The Post-American World

By Fareed Zakaria

W. W. Norton. 288 pages. \$25.95.

By Johann Hari

Are we living in the final days of American dominance? The *Newsweek* and CNN honcho Fareed Zakaria opens his latest work with some slap-in-the-face facts: "The world's tallest building is now in Taipei, and it will soon be overtaken by one being built in Dubai. The world's richest man is Mexican, and its largest publicly traded corporation is Chinese. The world's biggest plane is built in Russia and Ukraine, its leading refinery is under construction in India, and its largest factories are all in China." But this is not a Rome-style collapse, with the amphitheatres of America regressing to scrub. America is standing still, or only moderately declining. What we are witnessing is "the rise of the rest."

Zakaria argues there have been three tectonic power shifts in the past half-millennium. In the fifteenth century, the West began to spurt ahead. In the late nineteenth century, the U.S. zoomed ahead within the West. Today, we are living through the catch-up of the rest of the world. In China alone, the average income has multiplied sevenfold in the lifetime of a thirty-year-old. So what will the planet look like as America becomes only one strong power-player among many?

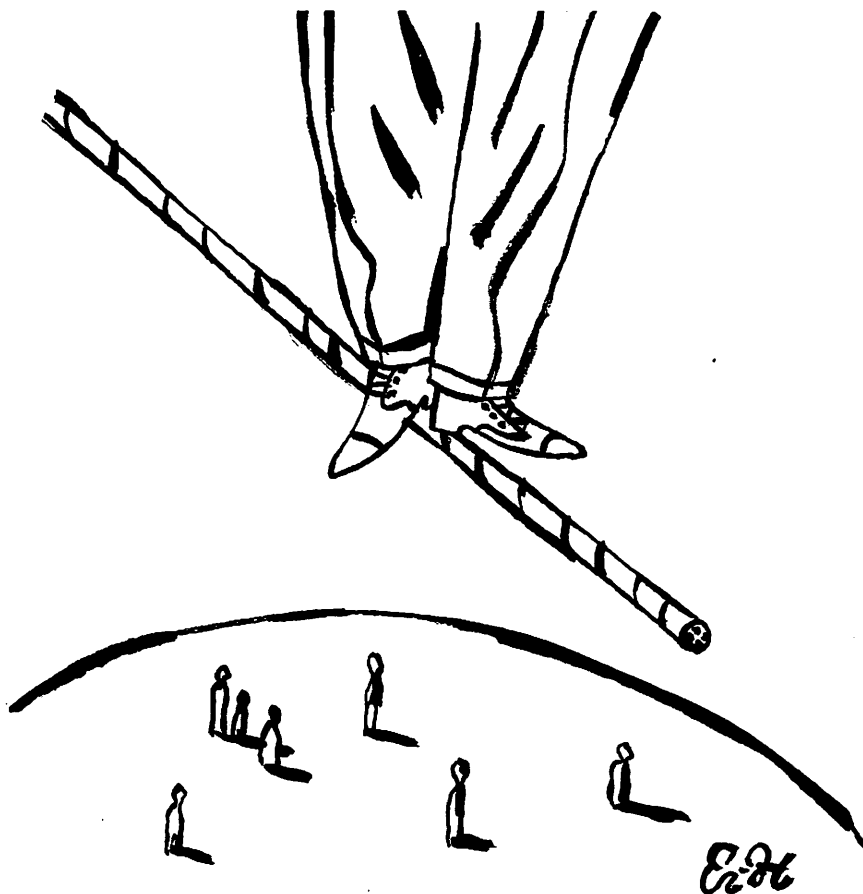
In some ways, Zakaria is one of the least irritating of market funda-

mentalists commentators. He's a super-smart Indian immigrant to the U.S., and his reading, traveling, and learning are wide—even if they are then squeezed through a tiny ideological window. A certain amount of reality percolates into his writing—which is a relief after the willful disregard of reality by the Bush Administration and the neocons.

So at periodic intervals in *The Post-American World*, he punctures some of the most feverish *National Review*-style fantasies about what a post-American world will be like. For example, he deflates the idea that Europe is about to become a shariah-law-enforcing "Eurabia" with a few brusque statistics: "The best estimates, from U.S. intelligence agen-

cies, indicate that Muslims constitute about 3 percent of Europe's population now, and will rise to between 5 and 8 percent by 2025, after which they will probably plateau." He says panic about Chinese military capacity is overblown, as is the risk from the small number of jihadis. He gawks at Dick Cheney lamenting he can't be as "tough" as the tyrannical Soviet Union, and laughs out loud at Cheney's adviser Bernard Lewis claiming confidently that "Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad planned to mark an auspicious date on the Islamic calendar (August 22, 2006) by ending the world. (Yes, he actually wrote that.)"

But in his sober analytical style, he offers some ideological assertions that



ERIC HANSON

Johann Hari is a columnist for The Independent newspaper of London who has reported from Iraq, Congo, the Gaza Strip, and elsewhere. In 2007, he was named Newspaper Journalist of the Year by Amnesty International.

are just as shocking and counter-factual. Zakaria asserts—quoting Margaret Thatcher—that “There Is No Alternative” about which path all countries must take if they are to continue rising: the path of pure markets. Only a passive state that lets corporations run where they will can ensure progress and a fall in poverty. So all the “post-American” countries must, as an urgent matter, demolish the active state (no matter what their people want) and become Thatcho-Reaganites—only more so. He mocks those on the “unreconstructed left” who beg to differ.

Yet this book comes as the market fundamentalist bubble is bursting. Zakaria says with admiration that “London’s financial system was overhauled in 2001, with a single entity replacing a confusing mish-mash of regulators, [and this is] one reason that London’s financial sector now beats out New York’s.” Not long after this work went to press, that very act of deregulation-mania caused the first British bank run in over a century. As hundreds of thousands of people rushed to withdraw their savings, the British state had to step in with a \$45 billion bank-saving guarantee—a potential expenditure larger than the country’s entire school budget.

The prescription Zakaria is pushing has been disastrous time after time. To give just one more example, he lauds the lifting of capital controls in the 1970s and 1980s in developing countries as a quasi-divine act of wisdom, providing a “celestial mechanism for discipline.” He doesn’t acknowledge it produced significantly lower growth in the developing world than in the “bad old days”—just 1.7 percent annually, compared with 3 percent before. Worse, he doesn’t even note that free market policies led directly to the catastrophic collapse of Argentina from a middle-class country to a beggared one almost overnight.

Indeed, Zakaria’s claim that “There Is No Alternative” is demolished by a piece of evidence he himself offers. He brags that the U.S. has the most competitive economy in the

world, but then acknowledges that it has been “slipping sometimes in recent years to small northern European countries like Sweden, Denmark, and Finland.” Is this the Sweden that takes 51 percent of GDP in taxes, and spends it on the most lavish welfare state in the world, producing one of the most content populations? And it’s more competitive than America? So it turns out There Is An Alternative course for the post-American world to pursue—an extraordinarily impressive one—but Zakaria just doesn’t want to pursue it, because he would have to rethink some of his dogmas. When a poor country like Hugo Chávez’s Venezuela tries to imitate this social democratic vision rather than Zakaria’s, he abuses them as “troublemakers” prone to “insane rants.”

To prop up this ideological vision, he has to go even further and draw a false version of history. He says that “for almost three centuries, the world has been undergirded by the presence of a large liberal hegemon—first Britain, then the United States,” which “kept their own markets open” and “traveled around the world pushing countries to . . . free up their politics.”

This is startling in its ignorance. Far from keeping its markets open, the United States developed by protecting its industries behind huge tariff walls. By 1820, the average U.S. tariff was 40 per cent; Abraham Lincoln then pushed them higher, and they generally stayed there until the First World War—the very period Zakaria identifies as the era when the U.S. spurred ahead. Yet this is the route Zakaria wants to deny to developing countries today; he derides anybody in the poor world who wants Lincoln-style subsidies and protections. The only criticism he has of the IMF and World Bank—which push this brutal vision on the world’s poor—is that they are always headed by a European and an American, respectively. As for his idea that the U.S. pushed countries to “free up their politics” . . . what can we say? This will be interesting news to the

peoples of Chile, Iran, Congo, Indonesia, and Nicaragua, who saw their democrats murdered with U.S. support.

But Zakaria clings so fervently to his flailing ideology that he has a chilling contempt for any democratic resistance to it. He wants the post-American world to be a market fundamentalist one where counterbalancing state action occurs only if businesses demand it to make themselves work more smoothly. To achieve this, he repeatedly lauds the Chinese dictatorship for being able to impose this vision on their people, unlike those scrappy, messy democracies.

With fawning admiration, he quotes a Chinese official saying: “We have to let markets work. They draw people off the land and into industry, out of farms and into cities.” Then Zakaria notes sadly that when he discusses this same subject with Indian or Latin American officials, “they launch into complicated explanations of the need for rural welfare, subsidies for poor farmers, and other such programs, all designed to slow down market forces and retard the historical process of market-driven industrialization.” He says with regret: “Politicians need votes in the short term. China can take the long view. . . . [The Chinese way] would be impossible in democratic India, where vast resources are spent on short-term subsidies to satisfy voters.”

Never mind that the Indians and Latin Americans are reacting to the will of their peoples, and those “short-term” subsidies keep people alive during economic transitions. The peoples are wrong, and any concessions to them is “populism”—the ultimate market fundamentalist swear word. Zakaria has a teleological worldview: The world will inevitably go in one direction, so we might as well speed it up. Messy human will mustn’t be allowed to get in the way; don’t they know There Is No Alternative? So tens of thousands of Indian farmers commit suicide if their subsidies are stripped away and they can’t

move to the cities; that's History. It had to happen. Teleology is always dangerous, whether Marxist or market fundamentalist, because it renders actual living people as irrelevant, disposable extras in the inexorable March of History.

This becomes most clear in a sinister anecdote he offers, apparently as praise. He writes: "One American CEO recalled how Chinese officials took him to a site they proposed for his new (and very large) facility. It was central, well located, and met almost all his criteria—except that it was filled with existing buildings and people, making up a small township. The CEO pointed that out to his host. The official smiled and said, 'Oh, don't worry, they won't be here in eighteen months.' And they weren't." He then notes, apparently with sadness, "India does not have a government that can or will move people for the sake of foreign investors."

Zakaria's book is badly timed. Praising the resilience of the global

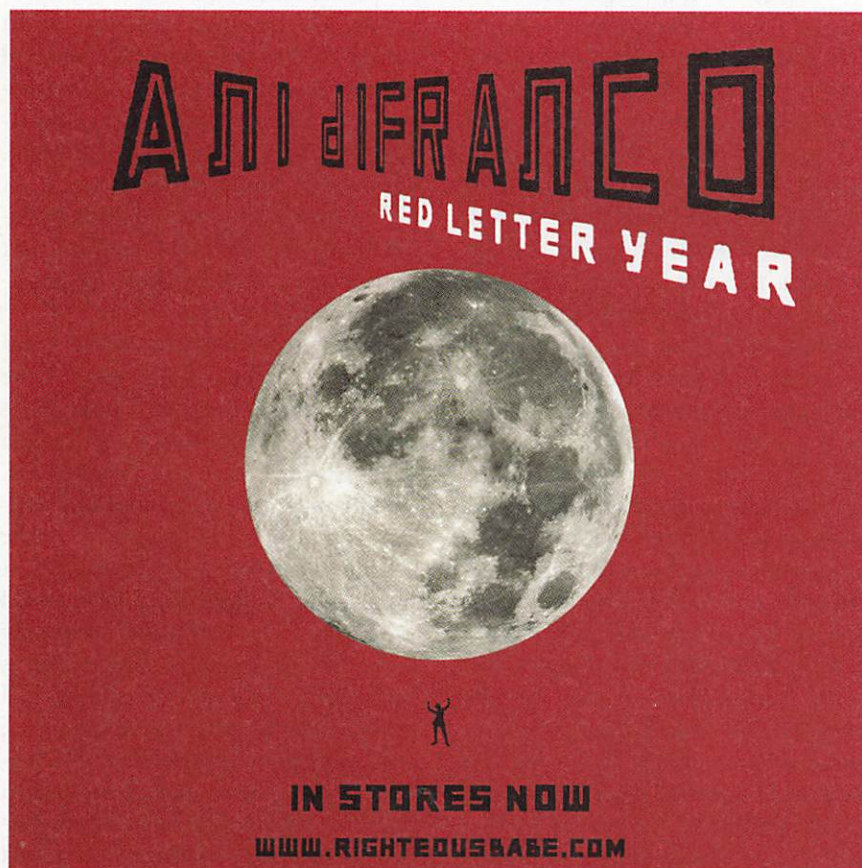
economy, he says "the front page of the newspaper seems unconnected to the business section." This standard Tom Friedman fare might have seemed true a decade ago—but it lies moribund on the page today when we are consumed by tremendous financial instability.

In a post-American world, Zakaria believes the U.S. should accept the rise of the rest, and try to maintain its position by being an "honest broker" between them all. Like Bismarck's Germany, it should be "better friends" with every country "than they are with each other." This is an improvement on the neoconservative belief outlined by the Project for the New American Century that the U.S. needs to retain "full spectrum dominance," crippling rivals before they emerge as a "threat."

But he says Americans "are right" to believe criticism of them is "irrational, and that the country is unfairly turned into a punching bag." Spearheading global warming, invading Iraq, and killing perhaps 600,000 peo-

ple, forcing market fundamentalism on the world through the IMF . . . if you complain about this, you are "irrational"? You should shut up and accept the U.S. as your best friend and "honest broker." Zakaria acknowledges that at home, the U.S. government has been "captured by money." He says "those who advocate sensible solutions" will "lose funds from special interest groups." But he seems to think this Big Money discreetly drives around the State Department. If he acknowledged that special interests can drive foreign policy, too—pushing for attacks on Iraq or coups in Venezuela, for example—he might have to understand why the idea of the U.S. as an honest broker seems untenable to much of the world.

The Post-American World is a fascinating book, but not for the reasons its author intended. It is a character study of a highly intelligent man who believes himself to be rational and humane and impartially sifting the evidence—but actually pushes a vicious vision antithetical to both democracy and environmental sanity. ♦



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PS MUELLER

Bailout Wizard



There was a little news item recently about a man in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, who was sentenced to six years in prison for robbing \$20 from a child's piggy bank.

Think how much better things would have gone for him if only his name had been Freddie Mac, Bear Stearns, or any of the other flamboyant figures of high finance on Wall Street. They are the ones that rigged the regulatory system so they could rob the piggy banks of millions of American homeowners.

And when they got caught in the crash of their own house of cards, here came Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson (himself a former wizard of Wall Street), sprinting toward them fast as he could—not to arrest the scofflaws, but to reward them with a twelve-figure taxpayer bailout.

You might recall that Paulson is the fellow who spent the last several months pooh-poohing the notion that anything was fundamentally wrong with the Street's house of cards. Yes, he kept telling us, there are some difficulties with those tacky subprime mortgages, but the problem is "contained," and the market will magically correct itself—even as more and more fami-

lies were losing their homes, housing values were plummeting, the home construction industry was rolling into the ditch, and mortgage lenders were seeking the shelter of bankruptcy. Only when Wall Street itself began taking on a deathly pallor did Paulson suddenly bolt upright and shriek: "The sky is falling!"

So Paulson-the-capitalist now gives us an unlimited plan of unvar-

One, so far, he's been consistently wrong in his judgments and actions.

Two, the \$700 billion (even more than the Bushites have dumped into the dark hole of Iraq), is just for openers; Paulson may have to come back for more.

Three, his rescue focuses entirely on salvaging the wealthy perpetrators of this robbery, with nothing for those homeowners who got robbed.

Four, his bailing out the bankers

without erecting any regulatory barriers against a repeat of their thefts is in effect telling the kleptocrats that there is no punishment for their misdeeds . . . so why not do it again?

For me, however, two other fundamental flaws in the bailout are the most damning.

First is Bush & Company's assertion that these financial corporations are "too big to fail," so taxpayers simply have no choice but to pay billions of dollars to preserve them. Hello? Instead, we should be breaking them up, so America is not at the mercy of such behemoths, and so we can

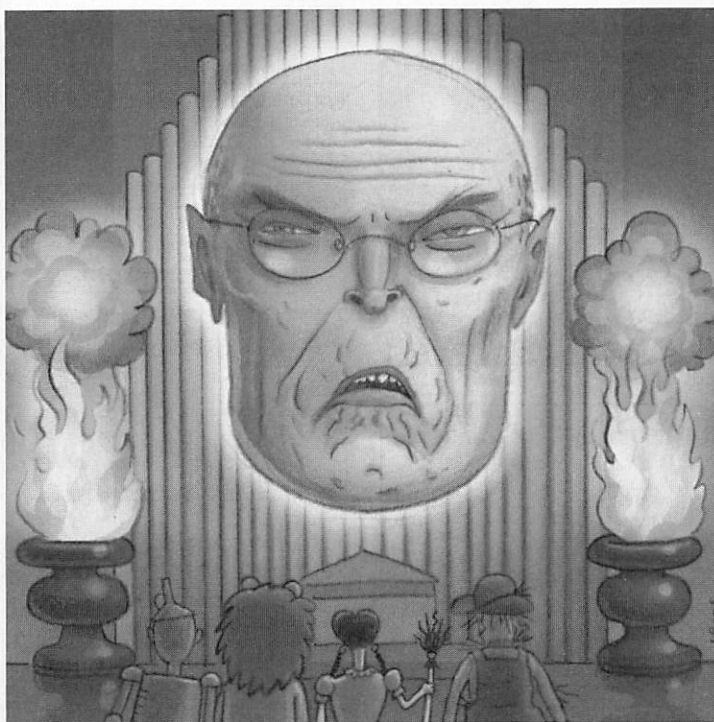
instill a bit of competition in the system.

Second, with the Paulson plan, Congress has again been stampeded into making unwise policy in a climate of fear.

When the wizard in *The Wizard of Oz* was finally exposed, Dorothy angrily accused him of being "a very bad man."

"Oh, no, my dear," he responded. "I . . . I'm a very good man—I'm just a very bad wizard."

So is Paulson.



JEM SULLIVAN

nished socialism to rescue the failed greedheads who did this to America (and to countries beyond). He got \$700 billion from you and me (\$2,000 per every man, woman, and child in America) so the government can buy up the bad bets that these speculators made. Trust me on this, he said.

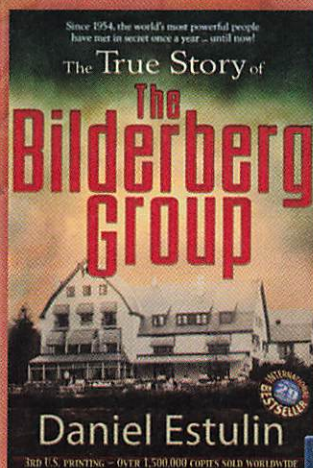
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I'd sooner trust a coyote with my last lamb chop.

Here are a few reasons not to trust him:

Jim Hightower produces The Hightower Lowdown political newsletter and is the author, with Susan DeMarco, of the new book "Swim Against the Current: Even a Dead Fish Can Go with the Flow."

PRESS FOR THE TRUTH



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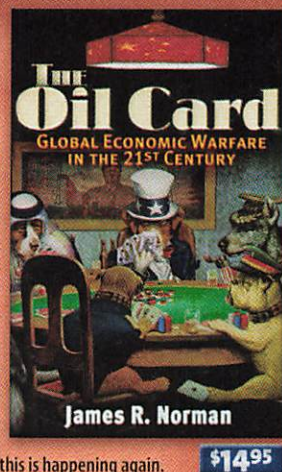
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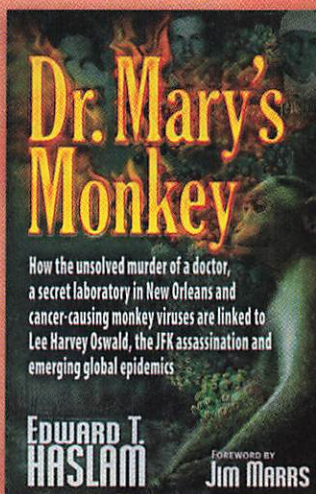
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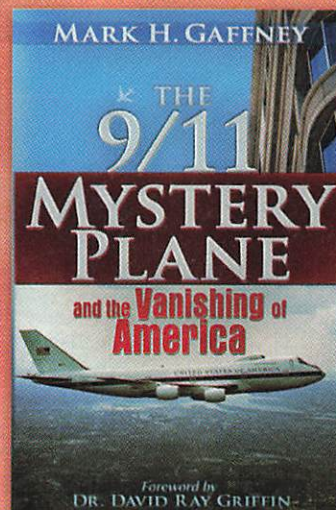
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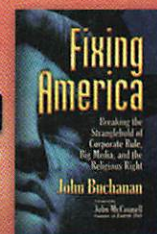
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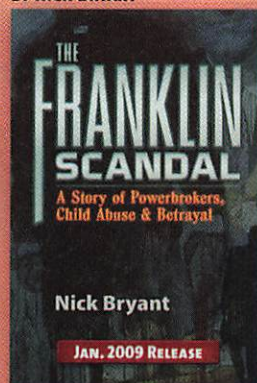
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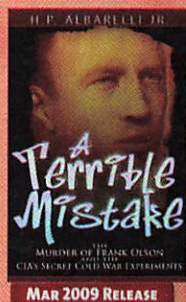
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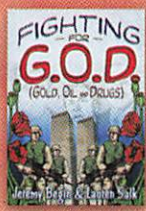
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